Impact Story 7:
The Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT)

THE OPPORTUNITY

Food fortification— adding nutrients at the point of processing, to staple foods and condiments that people already eat a lot of—is one of the best tools available to cost-effectively improve and protect people's micronutrient status. Today, over 125 countries have mandatory food fortification programmes. However, information on how well those programmes are working is limited in most countries. Fortification programmes are proven to have an impact on nutrition, but this impact can only be realised if nutrient intakes increase among those who don't consume enough currently.

The coverage of fortified foods and consumption patterns—that is, who consumes it (rural or poor groups, women or men), where it comes from (industrial or home production), and how much is consumed and how often—are critical to understand whether programmes will reach their potential.

THE SOLUTION

Motivated by the need for such information for its own programmes, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) developed the Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT) in 2013 for carrying out coverage assessments of fortification programmes (Figure 1).

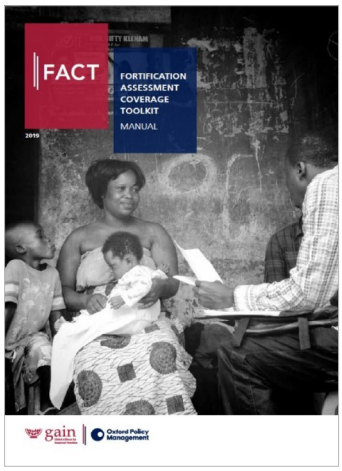

Figure 1: The Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT) Manual (click here for the manual and here for a video about why GAIN designed it and what it does)

The FACT is a Toolkit that provides standardised methods for the collection, analysis, and synthesis of data on quality, coverage, and consumption of fortified foods across countries. Specifically, it provides step-by-step guidance on how to plan, design, implement, analyse, and report a FACT survey. The Toolkit consists of a manual and 10 practical tools and templates. The FACT Manual was designed to provide guidance at each link in the nutrition data value chain, from prioritisation to decision making (Figure 2).

The **FACT** method focuses on **three** main questions:

1
Is a fortified food available and meeting the quality standards?

2
Are the population groups with the greatest need and potential to benefit from fortification (e.g., rural, poor, or food insecure populations, or those with low dietary diversity) consuming enough fortified foods for there to be impact?

3
To what extent are fortified foods contributing to nutrient intakes in the population and in specific groups at highest risk?

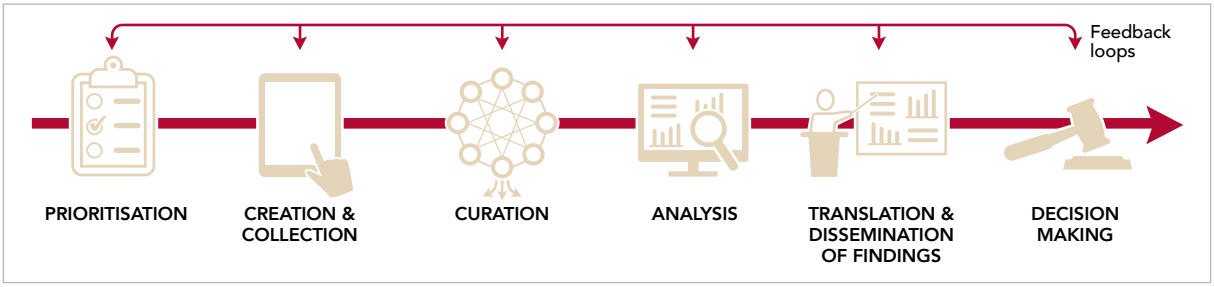

Figure 2: Nutrition data value chain (adapted from the 2017 Global Nutrition Report)

A FACT survey can be commissioned as a unique survey, or FACT indicators can be added to other data collection efforts where fortification and/or its outcomes are of interest (e.g., a nutrition survey or surveillance system).

Information generated by a FACT survey can be used by decision makers to improve fortification programmes by documenting successes and identifying gaps (Figure 3).

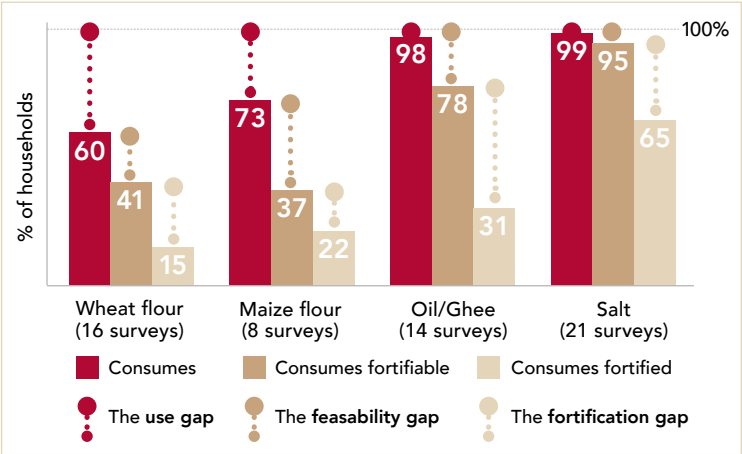

Figure 3: Aggregated FACT coverage data from on-going fortification programmes highlight several gaps in programme design and implementation (Friesen et al. 2019)

The Toolkit can be used by fortification programme stakeholders, such as government agencies, national and international organisations, universities, and individuals, who are responsible for planning, implementing, analysing, and reporting surveys that assess how well fortification programmes are working.

THE IMPACT

FACT survey results have been found to be actionable and to drive programmatic and policy decisions. For example:

- In Senegal, a FACT survey revealed that 97% of domestically produced oil was fortified while up to a quarter of imported oil was not. This resulted in rebalancing of monitoring resources by regulators to ensure monitoring of both domestically produced and imported products.
- In Pakistan, a FACT survey revealed that a large proportion of fortifiable flour consumed was from small-scale chakki mills that were not included in the fortification programme. This led to a feasibility assessment of chakki mill fortification to understand its potential for impact if included in the fortification programme.
- In Nigeria, a FACT survey revealed high household coverage of rice, which confirmed its potential as a fortification vehicle. The results informed the National Micronutrient Deficiency Control (MNDC) decision to include rice fortification as one of the programme interventions in Nigeria. Currently GAIN, in partnership with the World Food Program and Government of Nigeria, is working to establish an enabling environment for rice fortification in Nigeria, including the development of standards.
- Additionally in Nigeria, further analysis of FACT data found that if all foods that should be fortified with vitamin A contained the required amounts, women may be at risk of getting too much, which can have negative health effects. This led to the testing of a formal decision-making process as a way for policymakers to consider adjusting a programmes' design. A conditional recommendation was made to modify the design by updating the selection of foods to be fortified with vitamin A and/or the amounts of vitamin A to be added once evidence gaps on population need and consumptions patterns are filled (these data were being collected as part of national food consumption and micronutrient survey in 2021).
- Further results and implications as well as lessons learned from the development and rollout of FACT surveys conducted from 2013-2017 were published in a supplement of 5 peer-reviewed articles in the Journal of Nutrition.

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
Rue de Varembé, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland
T: +41 22 749 18 50 E: info@gainhealth.org
www.gainhealth.org

GAIN@20 Better Nutrition for All