



New Business Alliance to Improve Nutrition in Africa

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is setting up a Business Alliance to mobilize private sector support for improved nutrition for Africa's poorest people.

Mineral and vitamin deficiencies are a major cause of illness and death and affect approximately 2 billion people worldwide. Deficiencies of vitamin A, iron and iodine impair the learning ability and development of infants and young children, and undermine productivity in adults. Vitamin and mineral fortification of basic staples such as flour and oil is recognized by the international community as one of the most effective and simple ways to tackle these problems and improve the lives of vulnerable populations

The GAIN Business Alliance, which is chaired by Unilever, is a global network dedicated to finding market-based business solutions which address the critical issue of vitamin and mineral deficiencies worldwide. GAIN recognises that it is only through working hand-in-hand with the private sector that sustainable, large scale fortification programs can be achieved. Wherever GAIN funds projects it supports the establishment of a National Fortification Alliance where businesses work in partnership with government and civil society to make food fortification a reality.

The Business Alliance takes the concept of involving business in food fortification one step further. It provides a forum where companies can come together to plan concrete action to reach out to new markets with fortified products, at national, regional or international levels. The Business Alliance aims to deliver fortified foods to those who need them in a way that benefits both producers and consumers. The Business Alliance is looking to achieve a triple bottom line – increased profitability, public health benefits and local economic development and sustainability.

In Africa, GAIN currently supports food fortification in five countries – Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Morocco, South Africa and Zambia – and plans to expand to other countries in the coming years. The new African Business Alliance will complement these national programs and aims to increase investment in fortification and open new markets by developing new financial mechanisms and business models for fortification, expand scientific knowledge and expertise in fortification and promote joint action between companies, development partners and governments.

The GAIN Business Alliance in Africa will also provide input to a Ten Year Fortification Strategy for Africa being developed in collaboration with the New Partnership for Africa's Economic Development (NEPAD) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). A first continental summit for the GAIN Business Alliance in Africa will be held by early 2007.

The Business Alliance is the private sector arm of GAIN, a foundation which brings together all those with a role to play in reducing vitamin and mineral deficiencies; from government, private industry and civil society. GAIN is supported by a range of groups including bilateral donors, UN agencies and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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