
Danone Policy on Micronutrient Fortification



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01 Context and challenges

Context

As stated by the World Health Organization, micronutrient malnutrition contributes substantially to the global burden of disease. Iodine, vitamin A and iron are most important in global public health terms; their lack represents a major threat to the health and development of populations the world over, particularly children and pregnant women in low-income countries. In addition to the more obvious clinical manifestations, micronutrient malnutrition is responsible for a wide range of non-specific physiological impairments, leading to reduced resistance to infections, metabolic disorders, and delayed or impaired physical and psychomotor development. This is not uniquely the concern of poor countries : micronutrient deficiencies (for instance iron deficiency) do represent a public health problem in some industrialized countries. The increased consumption in industrialized countries (and increasingly in those in social and economic transition) of energy-dense, micronutrient-poor foods, is likely to adversely affect micronutrient intake and status^{1 2}.

Danone's responsibility

As a company focused on healthy food categories with a good nutrient density (88% of sales volumes in healthy categories in 2016³), and selling products that are consumed daily in more than 130 countries⁴, Danone feels legitimate to provide fortified foods designed to contribute to the prevention of micronutrient deficiencies and intends to increase its offer of fortified products, while taking due consideration of all relevant food safety aspects.

Purpose & scope of this Policy

The present policy defines the conditions for the Danone teams to design and develop such fortified products. It applies to all Danone businesses worldwide, regarding products for the general population. Early Life Nutrition products and Advanced Medical Nutrition products, tailored to address the needs of specific groups, and framed by demanding regulations, require specific approaches^{5 6}.

02 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Reference documents

The company's approach on fortification is based on the international Codex guidance on fortification⁷, and on the respect of local regulations.

The Danone principles in micronutrient fortification

Principle n°1 : the need for fortification must be justified by data on the local context, the nutritional intakes of the population group, and the risk of deficiencies identified. This is done in the frame of the NutriPlanet programme (conducted in 54 countries at end 2016⁸). In the absence of a NutriPlanet study in the country, the need can be documented by national surveys, or acknowledged by one or several local experts based on their own findings. Alternatively, the fortification can be mandatory by law.

Principle n°2 : the product chosen for fortification must be of good underlying nutritional quality and compatible with a daily consumption. For this reason, only products belonging to Danone "healthy categories"⁹ are considered as relevant for fortification. On the opposite, Aquadrinks, desserts for occasional consumption, butter, cream and sour cream, are not appropriate vectors for fortification.

Principle n°3 : the fortification levels must be carefully adjusted in order to contribute significantly to cover the needs, whilst not posing a risk of toxicity, taking into account the intakes of the nutrient coming from the rest of the diet. This assessment is conducted by the R&D team in charge of the product's development in link with the Danone Food Safety Center, and is embedded in the "Goose" Project management system at all the project phases¹⁰.

Principle n°4 : the type and form of fortificant must only be selected after due consideration of all aspects : the ability of the supplier to provide a safe and reproducible ingredient, the bioavailability in the product's matrix, the risk of appearance of off-tastes during the process or during the shelf-life, the duration and conditions of shelf-life (refrigerated or ambient, etc.), the cost. Every time it's possible, the developers will consider using ingredients that inherently have a high level of the desired micronutrient, instead of simply adding the micronutrient in the formula (example : use milk fractions rich in calcium instead of adding calcium powder). Once the ingredient is selected, the ingredient specification formalizes the key quality criteria that the supplier will have to deliver on a regular basis, in order for the ingredient to bring the expected nutritional benefit into the product.

Principle n°5 : the fortification must be clearly mentioned on the labeling of the product, in all ways that are possible depending on the local regulation on labeling (in the nutrition table, as a claim etc..) The same applies for products that have naturally a high level of micronutrient.

¹ Guidelines on food fortification with micronutrients, WHO, Editors: Lindsay Allen, Bruno de Benoist, Omar Dary, Richard Hurrell, ISBN: 978 7 5019 7341 5 (Chinese), 92 4 159401 2 (English), 978 92 4 259401 0 (French), 978 92 4 359401 9 (Spanish) - http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43412/1/9241594012_eng.pdf?ua=1

² <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/micronutrients/en/>

³ Data Health & Nutrition Scorecard 2016 p.4 : <http://www.danone.com/en/publications/#pub3043>

⁴ <http://www.danone.com/pour-tous/notre-mission-en-action/une-entreprise-unique/une-presence-internationale/>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/special_groups_food/children_en

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/special_groups_food/medical_en

⁷ GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE ADDITION OF ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS TO FOODS

CAC/GL 9-1987, http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/zh/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252Fstandards%252FCAC%2BGL%2B9-1987%252FCXG_009e_2015.pdf

⁸ Data Health & Nutrition Scorecard 2016 p.12-13 : <http://www.danone.com/en/publications/#pub3043>

⁹ As listed in the Danone Nutritional Targets 2020, table p.7, <http://www.danone.com/en/publications/#pub3010>

¹⁰ Goose Passport Template Sept 2016.