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African Alliance for Improved Food Processing

Celebrating Business Growth and Wheat Flour Fortification Forum

Remarks by USAID Ethiopia Acting Mission Director Gary Robbins

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Indemen aderachu

On behalf of the United States Agency for International Development, it is my pleasure to celebrate the accomplishments and share in the learnings of the African Alliance for Improved Food Processing project, a public-private partnership between USAID, Partners in Food Solutions and Techno Serve.

Through this project, USAID has keenly focused on expanding wheat flour fortification, which previously was not occurring at significant scale.

Wheat fortification addresses nutrition challenges in Ethiopia, where chronic food insecurity and malnutrition are grave problems.

Under nutrition accounts for 45 percent of all child deaths and two out of every five children suffer from stunting, which means a lack of critical nutrients has made them small for their age.

Through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative, USAID has played a strong role in supporting the government's National Nutrition Plan, Agricultural Growth Program, and Productive Safety Net Program.

The achievable result of Feed the Future initiative is a sustainable reduction in poverty and hunger.

The availability of nutritious fortified wheat, a dietary staple in Ethiopia, is one-step toward expanding access to nutritious food and reducing hunger.

The activity's objectives are to increase the quality and competitiveness of Ethiopia's food processing sector and expand the availability of affordable wheat-based, nutritious foods by providing technical assistance from Partners in Food Solutions corporate experts to Ethiopia's commercial wheat millers, producers of fortified blended foods and flours, bakeries, and pasta manufacturers.

The activity is unique in USAID's Feed the Future portfolio in two major ways:

First, it links USAID's investment in developing the wheat sector with support for nutritious foods.

The activity connects agricultural, nutritional and industrial growth.

The activity also works hand-in-hand with USAID's flagship crop and nutrition activities, which both support the government's National Nutrition Plan.

Second, the project leverages development expertise from TechnoServe through the resources of USAID to link the technical and business expertise of volunteer employees from General Mills, Cargill, Royal DSM and Buhler to support food processors and millers in Africa, specifically Ethiopia.

Over the last three years, the activity conducted six sector-wide training events for government regulatory representatives and staff members from 165 food processors in technical and business subjects such as fortification of wheat flour, quality management systems, food safety and national standards.

The activity worked directly with 20 companies and farmers' cooperatives addressing 68 different business and technical projects including strategic plan development, marketing strategy development, product quality monitoring, flour extraction rate improvement, new product development, extension of product shelf life and wheat flour fortification among others.

Activity results include the first locally produced fortified wheat flour in Ethiopia by one company with four others are underway.

There are also several other significant accomplishments.

- New nutritious multi grain bread and other wheat products are now available in the market,
- Product quality and shelf life has been improved,
- Bakeries have expanded and opened more branches and provided more employment,
- Hygiene and sanitation has been enhanced in the food processing companies through the application of good manufacturing practices, and
- Nearly 500,000 farmers have experienced a consistent market for their wheat over the last three years.

While progress has been made, the overall level of wheat fortification is low and there are other products in Ethiopia where fortification can start occurring, including salt iodization.

I am confident that the participants in this room have the knowledge and drive to greatly expand food fortification in the coming years.

Speaking at the African Union a little more than two months ago, President Obama called us to action when he said, "With an alliance of government and the private sector in African agriculture, I believe we can lift millions of Africans from poverty."

This alliance, which we are celebrating today, is very central to our partnership in Ethiopia and the Feed the Future initiative, and USAID is committed to supporting these efforts in the future.

Thank you very much, *amasegenalehu*.