

**ASTCO Fortified Wheat Flour Product Launch**  
**Remarks by U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Peter Vrooman**  
**March 17, 2015**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Indemen walachoo!

I am happy to be here today on behalf of the U.S. Government, to celebrate the accomplishments of the African Alliance for Improved Food Processing, a public-private partnership between USAID, Partners in Food Solutions, Techno Serve and ASTCO. Through this partnership, ASTCO has developed one of Ethiopia's first wheat flours fortified with important vitamins and minerals.

This is an extremely significant development that addresses nutrition challenges in Ethiopia, where undernutrition accounts for 45 percent of all child deaths.

Where micronutrient deficiencies contribute significantly to illness and death among children.

And where levels of stunting, wasting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies are high, but showing improving trends.

In June of 2013, the state ministers of health, agriculture and seven other ministries, along with First Lady Roman Tesfaye, launched the 2013-2015 Multi-sector National Nutrition Program.

Since the launch, the ministries of health, industry, trade and other government sectors have taken important strides to ensure progress toward addressing micronutrient deficiencies through universal salt iodization and, most recently, fortification of flour and the development of mandatory laws for fortification.

Through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future Initiative, USAID has played a strong role in supporting the government's National Nutrition Program, Agricultural Growth Program, and Productive Safety Net Program. Feed the Future aims to increase agricultural productivity, ensure that growth is broad-based, and improve linkages to domestic and international markets in Ethiopia.

The primary goals of Feed the Future are, number one, reduce poverty by 30 percent for 16.8 million people by 2017, and number two, reduce stunting for 2.2 million children under the age of five from 50.6 to 40.5 percent. The achievable result is a sustainable reduction in poverty and hunger.

The African Alliance for Improved Food Processing partnership focuses on quality management systems, food safety and national standards, which in turn, will contribute to the growth of jobs related to agriculture and to improved nutrition. These, of course, directly link to the Feed the

Future objectives of increased agriculture-related economic growth and increased nutrition of vulnerable populations.

Our support to the alliance emphasizes training and support for the private sector flour industries to include flour fortification. Leveraging the private sector allows for the unique opportunity to engage with international partners based on increased production among smallholders, and to address nutrition needs in the population.

I want to acknowledge our partners in this project and so many others across the agriculture sector:

- the ministries of trade and agriculture
- the farmers' cooperative unions whose members grow the wheat
- government agencies like the Agricultural Transformation Agency and the Federal Cooperative Agency
- and the private businesses, such as ASTCO and the 19 other flour mills supported through this project

We expect the new products processed and packaged by ASTCO and other flour millers and processors to set a trend in micronutrient food fortification.

In closing, I leave you with this quote: "Health is like money, we never have a true idea of its value until we lose it."

So let's continue to work together to make a healthier and more prosperous Ethiopia.

I look forward to enjoying these delicious and healthy products and I am certain they be a market success.