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African Alliance for Improved Food Processing Project Launch

Opening Remarks

Deputy Mission Director Jason Fraser

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the launch of the African Alliance for Improved Food Processing Project, or AAIFP.

As you will learn today, the project'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.

AAIFP is supported by USAID Ethiopia through the U.S. Government's \$250 million Feed the Future Initiative, whose dual objectives are to improve agriculture productivity and the nutritional status of women and children in Ethiopia.

AAIFP is unique in the USAID Ethiopia Feed the Future portfolio for two reasons:

First, it links USAID's investment in the development of the wheat value chain under the Government's Agriculture Growth Program with our support for nutritious foods under the National Nutrition Program. This nexus provides increased incomes from wheat sales for Ethiopia's smallholder farmers and processors and greater access to quality and nutritious foods for Ethiopia's children. AAIFP is a linkage between agricultural, nutritional and industrial growth. AAIFP also works hand-in-hand with USAID's flagship crop and nutrition projects, the Agribusiness and Market Development project and ENGINE, which support the government's National Nutrition Program.

Second, AAIFP is an exciting public-private partnership that provides Ethiopia with the opportunity to leverage the development expertise and resources of USAID and AAIFP's implementer, TechnoServe, with the technical knowledge and resources of the private sector. Partners in Food Solutions, which supports AAIFP, is a unique nonprofit organization that links the technical and business expertise of volunteer employees from General Mills, Cargill, Royal DSM and Buhler to food processors and millers in Africa. AAIFP is already working in Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi, providing more than 40,000 hours of technical assistance from 500 world-class industry experts and food science engineers.

Today, Ethiopia becomes the fifth country to benefit from this unique public-private partnership.

The Growth and Transformation Plan's agro-processing target is to increase in income from improved production by 800 percent by 2015. Together through fortification and improved production and competitiveness, we expect AAIFP to contribute to this ambitious transformation of the industry as well as improve the nutritional status of Ethiopians.

Over the next two years, AAIFP will offer customized technical assistance to 20 medium and large millers and wheat processors in partnership with local universities, research institutes and business-development service providers to develop and implement technical training. The training will range from business and quality management to fortification, baking and milling technologies.

Furthermore, it is important to note that food fortification presents an opportunity to combat micronutrient malnutrition, an acute public health problem in Ethiopia, which suffers from among the highest rates of stunting in the world.

Looking at the agenda and range of participants attending today, there is a powerful mix of global and local expertise, entrepreneurial innovators and research and financial interests. I encourage all of you to take full advantage of this unique gathering to exchange your ideas, and develop strategies to support the needs and growth of the sector through this new project.

Thank you all for your participation. I hope to see new ideas, approaches and outcomes that will support AAIFP and the industry at large.