



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

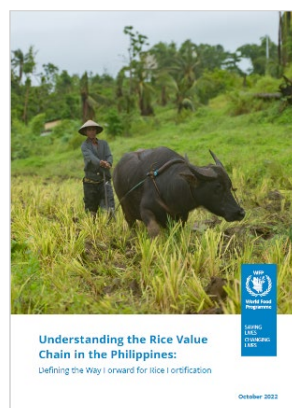
## Advancing Rice Fortification Initiatives in the Philippines

Micronutrient deficiencies continue to persist at alarming levels and disproportionately affect women of reproductive age and children. The Government of the Philippines established Republic Act (RA) 8976, also known as the Food Fortification Act of 2000, to address deficiencies in Vitamin A, iron and iodine. By making fortification of i) staple foods mandatory and ii) processed foods voluntary, the RA 8976 requires the fortification of salt, wheat flour, sugar, edible oil, and rice. The distribution of iron-fortified rice through social protection programmes is one of the priority interventions to address the deficiency in iron and prevent anaemia.

In the Philippines, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is closely working with the National Nutrition Council (NNC) and the members of the Food Fortification Technical Working Group and Rice Fortification Sub-Technical Working Group towards large-scale rice fortification in the country.

The use of fortified foods in school meals programmes, such as iron-fortified rice, was institutionalized through the RA 11037. In 2019, WFP implemented a pilot project in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to enhance the quality of school meals by providing iron-fortified rice. The project demonstrated that with the necessary support to local millers, iron-fortified rice could be locally produced. From 2021-2022, WFP Regional Bureau and the Philippine Country Office conducted studies focused on

the analysis of i) rice value chain, ii) local capacities, and iii) advocacy initiatives. This helped identify key opportunities and challenges in engaging stakeholders to make fortified rice available at scale. In partnership with DSM-Firmenich, WFP is implementing pilot projects in BARMM to introduce multiple micronutrient-fortified rice kernels. This initiative was received well by the members of the Rice Fortification Sub-Technical Working Group.



With the launch of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2023-2028, WFP is committed to supporting the Government to ensure that fortified rice is accessible through nutrition-sensitive interventions and commercial channels.



Social and behaviour change (SBC) is a strategic pillar of the PPAN. The NNC and other government partners look to WFP’s expertise to incorporate SBC into the national plan. WFP uses a rigorous approach to behavioural research, design, and implementation for scalable, context-specific transformation. Inclusion is a crucial approach of WFP’s SBC work, with evidence generation from teenage mothers, Indigenous Peoples, and persons with disabilities.

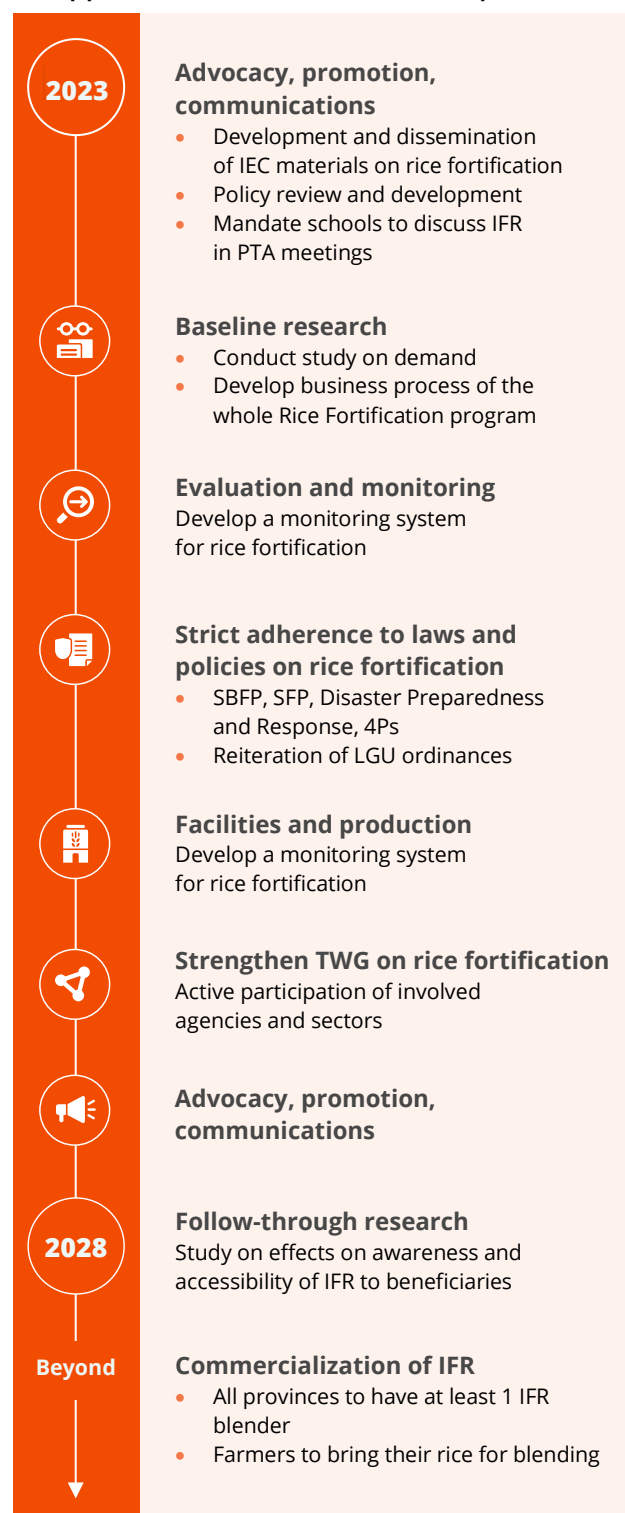
With support from DSM-Firmenich, between 2022 and 2024, behaviour-focused communications campaigns influenced the knowledge and practices of more than 100,000 Filipinos in conflict-affected, climate-vulnerable communities, with fortified rice as a core message across multiple channels. These entail direct engagement through dialogues with pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls as well as primary caregivers of children under 5. These also include playing educational games during rice distributions, leveraging communal spirit as a tool to create psychological safety for behaviour change. These interventions are built from an SBC Strategy and Action Plan co-created with local communities.

WFP also strengthens the capacity of frontline workers downstream and advocates for local policy changes upstream. Frontline workers co-design and co-implement SBC interventions on fortified rice, while local leaders, such as mayors and local chief executives, are trained in how SBC is an enabling tool for their policy goals linked to fortified rice.

In 2023, the Philippine Rice Fortification Roadmap was developed by NNC, with support from WFP. Key government agencies and stakeholders, including the members of Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Business Network (SBN), defined the vision and relevant milestones to scale up rice fortification. The SBN Philippines, with its 40 members, is also supporting the Government to strengthen the Rice Fortification Programme. A rice fortification technical working group was organized among the SBN members who have businesses in the supply chain management of rice.

WFP will continue to provide technical assistance on the drafting of the Rice Fortification Strategic and Operations Plan, started by NNC. The Plan will define priority actions that will address gaps in supply and demand for fortified rice and identify initiatives that will ensure steady supply for the nutrition-sensitive interventions including the National School-Based Feeding Program, Government Food e-Voucher Programme (locally known as *Walang Gutom 2027* or “No Hunger”) and Nutrition in Emergencies.

## Philippine Rice Fortification Roadmap



Scan the QR code to learn more about WFP’s work in the Philippines:

