

Revised standards proposed for processed cereal-based foods

By [Vivian Warby](#)

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In light of the increasing levels of malnutrition coupled with food insecurity and high food prices, a standard for processed cereal-based foods for malnourished infants and young children has been proposed.

Health Minister Barbara Hogan welcomed the proposal by CODEX for new work to develop this standard at the opening of the 30th Session of the CODEX Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses on Monday.

“We truly appreciate the development of such standards to control the emergence of products that would have adverse effect to children especially this that are already immuno-compromised.”

Revision has far-reaching implications

The revised standard for fortified cereal - which is one of the many topics under discussion at the 30th session - has far-reaching implications on the nutrition of infants and young children in the world and is a dilution of old standards of the baby foods.

The scope of the proposal, according to CODEX, is to develop a separate Standard for Processed Based Foods for Underweight Infants and Young Children for meeting the challenge of improving nutrition of infants and young children at the most critical age group in the developing world - an age group that determines the health of a person throughout their life span.

According to the minister, the Standard will cover processed cereal-based foods intended for the feeding of infants as complementary food from the age of six months onwards, and for feeding infants and young children having protein malnourishment.

High rate of malnutrition

“The new Standard has been requested owing to the high rate of underweight children in developing countries and will help to reduce the burden of malnutrition in these countries,” CODEX said.

Under-nutrition is implicated in more than half of the 10.5 million preventable deaths of children under the age of five that occurs in low to middle income countries each year.

According to UNICEF about more than one quarter of all under-five-year-olds in the developing world were underweight - that's about 143 million underweight children in developing countries.

Food programmes

Minister Hogan said that South Africa had some good programmes in place to bring down levels of malnutrition.

“We have effectively and innovatively implemented the Food Fortification programme. Through government regulations, all millers are now required to add specified amounts of vitamins and minerals to all maize meal and wheat flour that is produced in this country.

“Bread and maize meal are the most frequently consumed foodstuffs in South Africa and these products are therefore the best vehicle to deliver the required micronutrients to many South Africans who cannot consume an adequate diet.”

The minister said the country also had other nutrition programmes like vitamin A supplementation for children which was having a significant impact in improving the nutritional status of the population.

She added that the school nutrition programme which was to get a financial boost in the next financial year was also an important programme.

The minister wished the CODEX Committee participants well in their deliberations.

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