

Expanding the Local Availability of Fortified Foods for Improved Nutrition

Through policy support, private sector engagement, and technical assistance, CASCade is helping millions of people in Amhara region gain access to fortified wheat flour and edible oil for better nutrition.

The Context

In Ethiopia's Amhara region, micronutrient deficiency, often called "hidden hunger", continues to affect millions of people, especially women and children. Hidden hunger occurs when diets lack essential vitamins and minerals such as iron, vitamin A, zinc, iodine and folic acid. This can lead to anaemia, poor growth, weakened immunity, pregnancy complications, and birth defects such as anencephaly, encephalocele, spina bifida. It also reduces the energy people need for work, caregiving, and daily life.

According to the National Food and Nutrition Strategy Baseline Survey, 2023, the burden is particularly severe in Amhara, where 73% of women of reproductive age (WRA) are affected by micronutrient deficiencies, compared with 66% nationally. Although food fortification is widely recognized as one of the most cost-effective ways to address micronutrient deficiencies at scale, access to fortified foods remained limited across the region. The impact of such deficiencies is highly detrimental, leading to compromised immunities and complications in pregnancy.

The Challenge

The Government of Ethiopia has made significant progress in advancing food fortification nationally. Following the success of salt iodization, regulations introduced in 2022 made fortification of edible oil and wheat flour with essential vitamins and minerals mandatory.

Despite this policy progress, food fortification did not take off in Amhara. Processors of fortified edible oil and wheat flour faced multiple barriers, including low awareness of the benefits of fortification, limited technical knowledge, lack of access to essential equipment such as dosifier machines and premixes, and weak links to suppliers of the fortification equipment and technical support services. As a result, fortified foods were largely unavailable in local markets across Amhara, leaving consumers – particularly women and children – without access to more nutritious staples.

The Intervention

In Ethiopia's Amhara region, the CAtalyzing Strengthened policy aCtion for heAlthy Diets and resilience programme (CASCADE)¹ worked with government and private sector partners to accelerate the local availability of fortified wheat flour and edible oil at scale. The project focused on strengthening collaboration and practical action to support food fortification efforts, helping to improve access to more nutritious foods for women of reproductive age and children.

Out of 85 functional wheat flour factories and 14 edible oil factories found in Amhara region, CASCADE engaged 76 wheat flour producers and all 14 edible oil companies to strengthen knowledge of and commitment to food fortification. The project provided technical support by facilitating workshops to raise awareness on fortification among these groups, and linking flour producers and oil companies to dosifier machine suppliers, premix providers, training of food fortification and the technical laboratory experts and technicians, as well as relevant government counterparts involved in the food fortification process, including mixing, batching, packaging, sampling, storage, and food safety practices.

The CASCADE project engaged regional government stakeholders to ensure alignment with fortification policies and provided technical training on fortification. The project also forged public–private partnerships to strengthen supply chains, delivered ongoing technical support and organized review meetings to promote learning and sustainability.



A supportive supervision team from the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, the Industry and Investment Bureau, and CASCADE Ethiopia conducting a supervisory visit to MSA Edible Oil Factory in Bahir Dar, Amhara Region to assess laboratory compliance with food fortification and quality assurance requirements.

¹ CASCADE (2022–2027) works to improve food security, reduce malnutrition, and strengthen resilience among women of reproductive age and children across Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and implemented by CARE Netherlands, CARE USA, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the programme applies a food systems approach to support stronger nutrition policy implementation, promote multi-sectoral coordination, engage the private sector, and address structural and gender-related barriers to healthy diets.

The Results and Potential Impact

By mid 2026, CASCADE's support had provoked a notable shift the food fortification landscape in Amhara. Many food processors have now committed to installing the equipment needed to fortify their products with essential vitamins and minerals. By May 2026, out of the 99 food processors operating in the Amhara region (14 edible oil and 61 wheat flour processing factories), 90 companies are fortifying their products and of these, 75 (14 oil processors and 61 wheat processors) companies have already been certified by the government and others are waiting for certification. With collective action from processors, government, and development partners, the number of companies fortifying edible oil increased from just 2 to 14, while 76 wheat flour processing factories began fortifying, bringing the total number of companies in the Amhara Region fortifying with support from CASCADE to 90. These fortification efforts have already reached 39% of wheat flour and 88% of edible oil consumers in Amhara regional markets. As a result, an estimated 3.85 million people in Amhara are expected to access fortified wheat flour and edible oil for the first time. This is should significantly improve the intake of essential micronutrients and contribute to better health, growth, and overall well-being across the region.

" CASCADE opened our eyes to food fortification as a means to improve the health of the Amhara people." – Atikilt Asabe, Deputy Head of the Trade and Market Development Bureau



Building a Sustainable Pathway to Better Nutrition

CASCADE's work in Amhara Region demonstrates how targeted investments in policy implementation, private sector capacity, and multi-stakeholder collaboration can unlock large-scale solutions to malnutrition. By helping industries overcome barriers to fortification and strengthening coordination between government, industry, and development actors, the project is creating a more sustainable pathway to healthy diets.

As food fortification gains momentum in Amhara, CASCADE's support is laying the foundation for lasting improvements in nutrition and public health. By strengthening food systems, building industry confidence, and assisting government leadership, the project is supporting fortified foods become an accessible and reliable part of everyday diets for rural households.



A supportive supervision team from the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, the Bureau of Trade and Market Development, and the Bureau of Industry and Investment providing feedback to the management of Ethio Wheat Flour Factory in Bati Town, Amhara Region, on compliance issues identified during the visit



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