

The Truth Behind Micronutrients and Using Them for Enrichment

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Abstract

‘Nutritional enrichment’ can be defined as the addition of nutrients – usually micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) – to a product with the overall goal of improving or enhancing the quality or the nutritive value of the end product. Enrichment may be used in foods for numerous reasons. Before embarking on the journey of enriching a product, there are a few factors that should be considered.

Often, foods are enriched to make a product seem more desirable to the health-conscious consumer; however, leaning into dietary fads to decide what nutrients to use is a misguided practice. While terms such as ‘immune-boosting’, ‘well-being’, ‘health’ and ‘antioxidant’ are frequently heard, you need to consider the implications that the regulations may have on their use. Similarly, the level of enrichment is also guided by legislation in various ways; the regulations specify the level at which nutrient content claims (such as ‘source of calcium’ and ‘high in vitamin C’) are permitted on a food label, as well the level at which it is no longer classified as a foodstuff but rather as a complementary medicine.

Other aspects – such as your target market, processing, drug/food interactions, and vitamin and mineral co-absorption, as well as antinutrients, the nutrient form and nutrient bioavailability – are all important factors contributing to the effectiveness of enriched foods.

Having the essential information relating to enrichment, will assist in finding the balance between developing products with consumer appeal and maximum effect, without unnecessary costs.