

Consumers' Knowledge, Perception, And Utilisation of Fortified Food Products in The Rural Households of Ngcobo, Eastern Cape Province

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Abstract

Dietary inadequacies of vitamins and minerals has emerged globally creating hidden hunger or micronutrient deficiency (MND) and regarded as a public health concern. More than 2 million people globally suffer from micronutrient deficiency such as zinc, iron, iodine, vitamin A and folate. MND is present in developed and developing countries. Intervention to prevent MND include food supplementation, fortification, and diversification. Food fortification is cost effective and simple to apply. Food fortification was introduced in the 20th century and contributed to reducing MND. MND exists and is dominant in rural areas in South Africa despite food fortification. An average diet of SA adults is low in calcium, iron, folate, and Vit B6 with rural women and children being the most affected. A certain level of nutrition knowledge is required to understand fortified food products (FFP) and improve consumer perception and utilisation of FFP. The aim of the study was to establish knowledge, perception, and the utilisation of fortified foods among rural households in Ngcobo, Eastern Cape Province.

A sample of 104 adults were chosen using system random sampling and who are regular buyers of the household. A survey using a questionnaire was used to establish consumer's knowledge, perception, and utilisation of fortified foods. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Cronbach alpha and analysis of variance were determined.

Consumption of fortified food products was high among the sampled group. Consumers believe in healthy eating though knowledge levels are low. Young adults are more knowledgeable.

The study highlighted some critical issues surrounding knowledge, perception, and use of fortified food products. An important finding was their use of fortified foods even though their knowledge was low indicating that consumers do not read the label when purchasing food.

The findings of this study indicate purchasing of fortified foods products with poor level of knowledge about these products. Poor nutrition knowledge highlights the need of nutrition intervention programs focused on nutrition education on the preparation and benefits associated with fortified food products.