

## The opportunities and challenges of food product reformulation

On 5 November, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) published, “[The Product Reformulation Journey so Far: an Assessment](#),” which demonstrates the importance of the food and beverage industry in improving the nutritional quality of its products as well as innovating and reformulating, while overcoming the challenges of doing so. As representatives of the food and beverage industry, we welcome this report, and we were grateful for the opportunity to provide the industry’s perspective during the research phase.

The food industry has a role to play in supporting public health and the wider food system. Food processing enables us to minimize food safety risks, reduce food waste, increase shelf-life, increase the bioavailability of nutrients in some products, create natural flavors and make some foods edible and more digestible. Some processing techniques such as drying reduce transport weight, which has a positive impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This report highlights the various aspects of reformulation to improve the nutritional quality of products. Reformulation should not be done in isolation, but instead should be part of a comprehensive strategy to improve dietary quality and educate the consumer, offering products which are tasty, nutritious, affordable and safe. This is key to generating wide-spread and lasting change for the benefit of public health. As part of the next steps, we would welcome joining forces with the report authors to define how we could foster such a multi-stakeholder approach and collective action, bringing together governments and the private sector in setting reformulation targets and shifting consumer demand.

While the report mentions the importance of using a multi-stakeholder approach to achieve strong outcomes, we would like to further highlight why this is important: we believe that collaboration between companies and governments is a critical lever to achieving nutrition targets through product formulation and reformulation, with each stakeholder contributing their unique expertise along the way.

This strategy would lead to a win-win-win situation: for the consumer, for government and for business. In 2018, Lawrence Haddad, GAIN’s Executive Director, published a [comment](#) piece in *Nature* on incentivizing business to help tackle challenges related to nutrition. He observed that food and agriculture companies are the biggest investors in the food system with potential, therefore, to be a significant part of the solution. He encourages governments to make it easy for companies to provide nutritious foods by actively supporting businesses that produce, process, manufacture healthy foods; generating demand for healthy foods; investing in new models to emulate; naming and fanning success stories; and fostering public-private engagement on nutrition. In short, food companies should not only be penalized for unhealthy foods but also rewarded for efforts to provide nutritious foods.



By working together and setting common targets, the food and beverage industry will contribute to achieving successful and effective reformulation. In particular, we are committed to sharing our scientific and technology knowledge to help set meaningful reformulation targets that will improve consumer health while preserving consumer acceptance. We could build on the good example of the Dutch Prevention Agreement, where many stakeholders, including the food industry, are extensively consulted in setting of reformulation targets – this ensures that targets are feasible yet ambitious for all parties, while meeting public health needs and leveraging business’ innovation capabilities.

We propose using the Tokyo 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit to showcase the benefit for society of setting joint commitments amongst all stakeholders, contributing to the attainment of the SDGs. We look forward to working together with governments, civil society and others to ensure reformulation is on the agenda and to collaboratively accelerate this important work.

*This article is a response from members of WBCSD’s [FReSH Project](#) on “The Product Reformulation Journey,” a report commissioned and published by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).*