

# Introducing fortified rice to Myanmar

## Frequently asked questions about fortified rice

### What is fortified rice?

Fortified rice is rice with eight added vitamins and minerals—iron, vitamin A, B1, B3, B6, folic acid, B12, and zinc, to improve its nutritional content.

### Is it genetically modified?

No! Fortified rice is made from Pawsan rice flour and vitamins and minerals which are combined to look and taste like traditional rice. These fortified grains are then mixed at a ratio of 1:99 fortified grains to unfortified traditional rice grains.

### Do you prepare it differently?

No! You can rinse the rice before cooking in exactly the same way as traditional rice, without the vitamins being washed off. Fortified rice is cooked in exactly the same way as traditional rice and can be safely stored in dry conditions for 12 months, just like traditional rice.

### Does it taste the same?

Yes! When fortified rice is cooked, it has the same taste, color and texture as traditional rice. In Myanmar both Pawsan and Emata varieties are available so no matter what rice you prefer you can continue to enjoy that taste with added benefits.

### Why fortify rice?

Fortifying food is a known safe and effective way to improve public health, and has been used around the world since the 1920s. Salt, maize flour, wheat flour, sugar, vegetable oil, and rice are commonly fortified to improve their nutritional content. In Myanmar, fortifying rice can help solve nutrition problems without requiring people to make any behavioral modifications, as Myanmar people are among the biggest daily consumers of rice in the world.

### What are the benefits?

Rice is the staple food of Myanmar and fortifying rice is the most affordable and effective way to improve nutrition without asking people to change their eating habits. Studies from around the world show that fortified rice is effective in addressing micronutrient deficiencies, which have life-long consequences for health, productivity and mental development.

### How fast can I expect health effects from consuming fortified rice?

Fortified rice works to address micronutrient deficiency, which occurs when micronutrient stores in the body have been depleted, a process which usually takes months. Building up new stores also takes time – for example, formation of new red blood cells to counteract anemia takes at least two weeks. But the process of building back up what is lost starts immediately.

### Does fortified rice cost more than traditional rice?

Retail prices for fortified rice are created by the private market but the fortification process adds to the cost of producing rice. At the same time, many consumers are willing to pay a little more for extra health benefits.

### Is fortified rice made in Myanmar?

Yes, fortified rice is being produced in Myanmar using locally grown Pawsan and Emahta rice and a micronutrient pre-mix supplied through an international company. Producers are certified by the National Nutrition Centre (NNC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

### Who should eat fortified rice?

Everyone! Fortified rice is beneficial for the general population of Myanmar.

### Where can I buy it?

The project to introduce fortified rice currently focused in the Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Sagaing, and Rakhine regions. Fortified rice is available in supermarkets such as City Mart and Ocean Supercenter, and minimarts such as G&G. As the program to introduce this new healthy alternative to traditional rice grows, fortified rice will be available in more and more supermarkets and shops across the country.

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