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Dear Interested Party

### **BREAD AND FLOUR REGULATIONS 1998**

I am writing to you inform you of the outcome of our recent review of the Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 (BFR) and whether mandatory fortification of wheat flour (except wholemeal) in England should continue.

The Government has now reached a decision and has concluded that the Regulations should be retained in their existing format. This decision takes into account an assessment of the health impacts, the impact on industry and on other parts of the UK, and the interests of consumers. The results of the public consultation also indicated most respondents to be in favour of continuing with mandatory fortification.

This issue was an action arising from the Red Tape Challenge (RTC) 'Hospitality, Food and Drink' theme to review national rules on bread and flour. It is now clear from the review of the Regulations that there would be no economic or health benefits to removing or amending the existing provisions laid down in the BFR.

The Bread and Flour Regulations (BFR) are national rules, not deriving from any EU directives, which require mandatory fortification of wheat flour (except wholemeal flour) with calcium, iron, niacin and thiamin. They also lay down specifications for the addition of these nutrients to flour and control the use of the terms wholemeal and wheatgerm.

During the review the economic impact on industry was considered and the Department of Health advised on the health impacts. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) also provided an assessment of the health implications of removing mandatory fortification for all or some of the nutrients. The view of stakeholders were sought and a 12



week public consultation was held to gauge the views of all those with an interest in this area.

A total of 47 responses to the consultation were received with views coming from a wide cross section including health professionals, consumer organisations, millers, bread makers and the food industry. The results indicated that most respondents were in favour of continuing mandatory fortification for all four nutrients. Many felt these to be important regulations and, though supportive of the deregulatory agenda they could see no real benefit resulting from any of the changes proposed.

The health assessment carried out by SACN concluded that in order of public health nutrition importance, the case for maintaining the mandatory addition of calcium to flour was strongest, followed by iron with niacin and thiamin much weaker. The greatest detrimental impact of removal of mandatory calcium and iron fortification would be for young people and women with potential increased risk of calcium deficiency which is associated with poor bone health and osteoporosis.

Our economic estimates indicated there to be no economic benefits to any of the sectors of industry in removing mandatory fortification. Consideration was also given to requiring mandatory fortification of flour with calcium and iron only on the grounds that the health evidence for retention of these nutrients is stronger than for niacin and thiamin. However responses to the consultation suggested there would be little benefit for business and it could lead to increased complexity. We also took into account the uncertainty around the health impacts on certain population groups with higher requirements for these two nutrients and concluded that overall such a change would not result in any worthwhile benefits.

Having looked carefully at the evidence and implications for business and for public health, both DH and Defra Ministers recommended that these regulations should remain unchanged. This recommendation was endorsed by the Home Affairs committee and Reducing Regulation Committees.

A summary of the responses and issues raised including a list of respondees can be found at [www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra) .

**Yours Faithfully**

**Michelle McQuillan**

