

91 - Biofortification in Brazil: A sustainable way to improve nutrition and health

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Most efforts to combat micronutrient deficiency in the developing world focus on providing vitamin and mineral supplements to the poor and on fortifying foods with these nutrients through postharvest processing. The introduction of biofortified crops - varieties bred for increased mineral and vitamin content - could complement existing nutrition interventions and provide a sustainable, low-cost way of combating malnutrition. Research and development of biofortified foods in Brazil highlight a unique aspect that makes Brazil different from other countries - Brazil is the only country where eight different crops are studied at the same time, namely, pumpkin, rice, sweet potatoes, beans, cowpeas, cassava, maize, and wheat. The project aims to fortify foods that are already part of the diet of the population providing access to more nutritious products without requiring any changes in their consumption habits. In the field, cultivars are selected and the most promising ones move on to the breeding stage. At this stage, the objective is to attain more nutritious cultivars that also have good agronomic qualities (yield, resistance to drought and pests and diseases), besides good market acceptance.

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