

The Rutgers University Policy Research Consortium

Impacts of Policy Change: Infant Cereals in Malawi

Target Countries: Malawi
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Contract: Rutgers University
Subaward: Tufts University
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Why focus on infant cereals?

- Infants from 6 to 24 mo. have rapid potential growth but small stomachs, so need high density semi-solid foods
- Since the 1960s, food aid programs have used ready-to-cook premixes (e.g. SuperCereal Plus)
- Similar premixed cereals are routinely sold by food companies in all countries of the world, but local brands are rarely trusted unless backed by expensive advertising

Malawi's proposed national standard could scale up private sector sales from local millers and food companies

- The Malawi Bureau of Standards drafted infant cereal standards in 2017, but not yet implemented
- Standards and certification are needed for small, local entrants to compete with established multinationals
- To measure the potential impact of these standards, we did marketplace experiments with 359 mothers at 16 locations
- We also tested actual quality for 94 samples of 8 brands, to verify nutrient contents and mycotoxin contamination

We found high potential demand, but low and variable quality

- Caregivers have a strong preference for premixed cereals, due to difficulty of feeding infants with family foods
- Existing products have unpredictable contents, so standards and certification are needed to build trust and expand sales

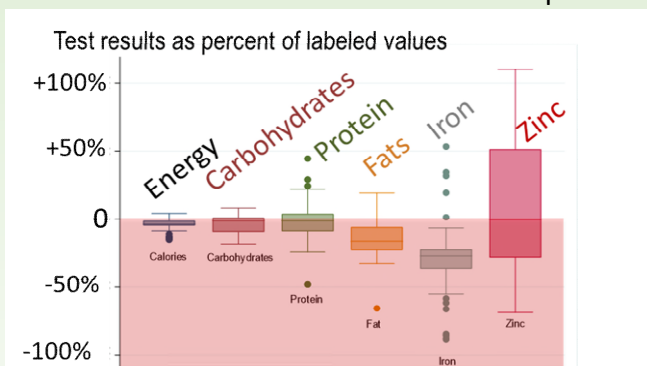


Figure 1: Nutrient test results for 94 samples from 8 brands of premixed cereals in Malawi (July 2018)

Test results relative to current and proposed standards

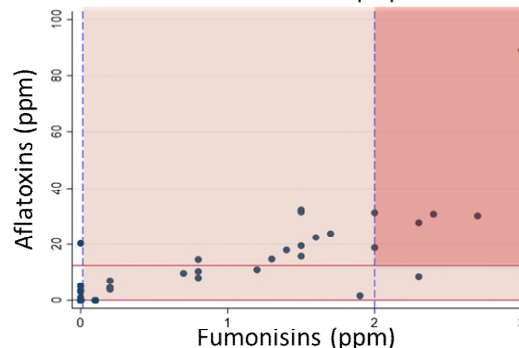


Figure 2: Mycotoxin test results for 94 samples from 8 brands of premixed cereals in Malawi (July 2018)