

14<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**HFMA response to the Government's announcement of a consultation on proposals for the mandatory fortification of flour in the UK**

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As the voice of the natural health industry, the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) welcomes and actively supports the importance the Government is placing on vital preconception folic acid intakes with its latest fortification plans.

However, there is a real risk that relying on fortification alone will confuse advice on essential folic acid supplementation, leaving some women of childbearing age believing that including bread in their diets will be enough to adequately reduce the risk of neural tube defects in pregnancy.

Consumption of bread in the UK has declined by 12% in the last 5 years<sup>1</sup>, even more so amongst the particular at-risk group, and combined with the current low uptake of supplements prior to pregnancy, there is a danger that the modest amount of folic acid provided by fortification will not address the nutritional needs of most women of childbearing age.

There is no question that the overall folate status of the general population would improve as a result of mandatory fortification. But raising awareness and education on the need to continue to consume 400mcg of folic acid both before and during the first trimester would become even more important.

We believe there is a real risk of the law of unintended consequences coming into play on this issue, as women of child-bearing age may mistakenly believe that including bread in their diet means they are no longer at risk, whereas the modest additional intake from this source cannot provide the full protection required.

The HFMA will be responding in due course to the Government's consultation.

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**The HFMA**

The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) is the voice of the UK's natural health industry and represents more than 125 manufacturers and suppliers of natural health products. Founded in 1965, the HFMA is a not-for-profit organisation which operates long-standing codes of practice to ensure that member companies adhere to high standards and offer good quality, safe products supported by responsible, lawful information. For further information about the HFMA, visit [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://reports.mintel.com/display/917728/?\\_cc=1](http://reports.mintel.com/display/917728/?_cc=1)