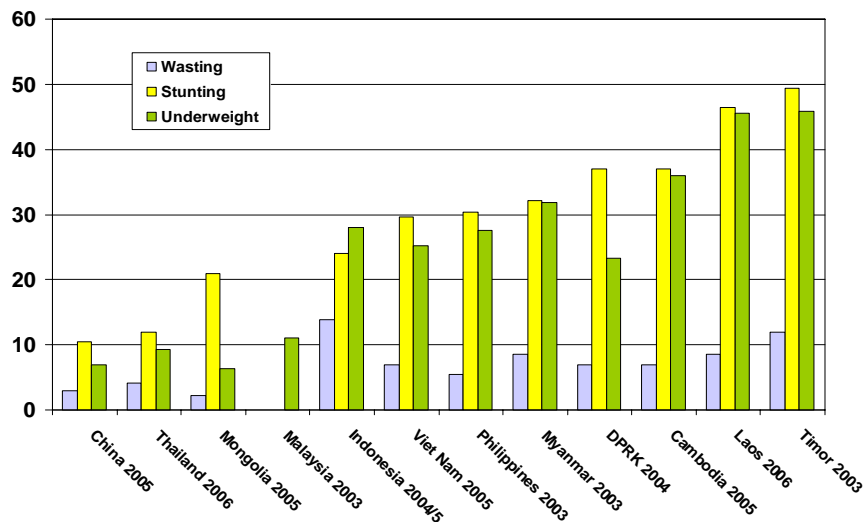




**FACT SHEET**  
**Nutrition and Food Fortification Status in Participating Countries**

Overall, the East Asia and Pacific region compares favourably to other regions in relation to progress in reducing undernutrition; it has a much lower prevalence of underweight than South Asia and both Eastern and Southern and West and Central Africa. It has also experienced a sharp decline in underweight prevalence between 1990 and 2004 (from 25-25%). However this improvement was primarily driven by gains in China, where underweight prevalence was reduced by more than half; China contributes 59% of the region's under 5 population. Other countries in the region continue to have high prevalence rates of undernutrition and slow or stagnant declines, and are hence, not on track to achieve the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium Development goal which involves halving the proportion of children who are underweight.

**Comparison of Nutrition Indicators in East Asian Countries**  
(most recent data, ranked by stunting prevalence)



**CHINA**

**Nutrition Situation:** Prevalence of undernutrition as rapidly declined in China in recent years and China currently has the lowest undernutrition rates in the region. However these national figures hide significant disparity within the country. Information on micronutrient deficiencies is limited but an estimated 25 per cent of reproductive age women and 17 per cent of under 5 children are anaemic. Breastfeeding rates are believed to be deteriorating.

**Fortification Status:** Salt iodization is mandatory and universal salt iodization was achieved in 1995; the first country in the region to do so. However efforts to maintain this achievement and to increase coverage in provinces and communes with lower coverage continue.. Efforts are now focused on working towards mandatory flour fortification. Flour fortification has proven efficacious in improving iron status in research populations in China. Voluntary fortification of soya sauce with iron is also ongoing although coverage is limited.

**INDONESIA**

**Nutrition Situation:** Indonesia's nutritional status has remained largely stagnant over recent years; underweight prevalence is about 28 per cent. A Household Health Survey in 2005 found that 39.5 per cent of women of reproductive age and 47 per cent of children under 5 are anaemic representing a serious public health problem. Very limited information is available on vitamin A deficiency but it is believed to be prevalent.

**Fortification Status:** Mandatory flour fortification has been legislated since 2002. Indonesian flour is fortified with iron, zinc, riboflavin, thiamine and folic acid. Salt iodization is also mandatory and coverage is currently 73 per cent.

## **MALAYSIA**

### **Nutrition Situation:**

Underweight prevalence in Malaysia is per cent (2003.) Malaysia has experienced the fastest rate of decline in underweight prevalence in the East Asia and Pacific region; from 25 per cent in 1990 to 11 per cent in 2003. New data on micronutrient status is limited. However, a recent study by University Putra Malaysia found that 84.8% of women did not have enough blood folic levels to protect their infants against neural tube defects (NTDs) and 38 per cent of women are anaemic.

### **Fortification Status:**

The Ministry of Health of Malaysia is currently preparing a position paper on flour fortification to submit to Cabinet. The paper will make the case for flour fortification with folic acid to prevent NTDs and possibly other nutrients, such as iron to address anaemia. Several States are also implementing salt iodization though Malaysia is the only country in the region not to have adopted salt iodization as a national strategy.

## **PHILIPPINES**

### **Nutrition Situation:**

The nutritional status in the Philippines has remained largely stagnant over the past 10-15 years and about one third of Filipino children are stunted and underweight. Breastfeeding practices have deteriorated, apparently influenced by intensive marketing of infant formula by international companies. Vitamin deficiencies including anaemia and iodine deficiency are also prevalent. According to a 2003 National Nutrition Survey, 32 per cent of under five children were found to be anaemic. However iodine status has improved as a result of efforts to increase coverage of iodized salt.

### **Fortification Status:**

Mandatory fortification of all flour, sugar, cooking oil, salt and rice has been in place since 2000. Salt iodization has recently improved significantly and coverage is now 75 per cent.

## **THAILAND**

**Nutrition Situation:** The National Statistics Office of Thailand, with support from UNICEF recently undertook a national survey which found that underweight prevalence has fallen to 9.3% and stunting prevalence is only 11.9 per cent. However the study showed that significant disparities exist between provinces, with some having alarmingly high prevalence. Moreover breastfeeding practices were shown to be very poor with only 5.4 per cent of babies 0-5 months exclusively breastfeeding.

### **Fortification Status:**

The Ministry of Health is currently reviewing the potential of flour fortification. Salt iodization is in place but coverage is only 47 per cent. Fortification of fish sauce with iodine and instant noodles with iodine, vitamin A and iron is on-going on a small scale.

## **VIET NAM**

**Nutrition Situation:** Nutritional status of under 5 children has been regularly improving over the last 10-15 years in Viet Nam such that Viet Nam has one of the most impressive declines in underweight prevalence in the region. Underweight levels are currently at 25.2 per cent (2005) having fallen from 33 per cent in 1990. Stunting levels, however are high at 30 per cent and anaemia remains prevalent; a six province study in 2006 found 37 per cent of children under 5 and 27 per cent of reproductive age women to be anaemic.

**Fortification Status:** Flour fortification is considered feasible and cost effective and flour consumption is increasing very fast. Interflour has just started fortifying all its flour produced in Viet Nam. International agencies including UNICEF, ADB and FFI are working with the national government to review the potential of mandatory legislation for flour fortification. Meanwhile a public awareness campaign on the benefits has been conducted. Salt iodization has been very successful in Viet Nam and a 2006 study has found coverage levels over 90%. There are regional differences however and two thirds of the Mekong Delta populations are still iodine deficient. Fish sauce is also being fortified with iron on a voluntary basis.

### **Other countries in our region:**

**Fiji:** Mandatory flour fortification has been ongoing since 2004 and Fiji supplies flour to many other countries in the Pacific.

**Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar:** Only salt fortification. Limited potential for flour fortification due to low consumption of centrally processed foods including flour. **Mongolia:** all flour milled locally is fortified.