



A Review of the Impact of Fortified Complementary Food Supplements on Linear Growth in Malian Infants from Food-Insecure Households, 2002

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Abstract

In rural Mali, food insecurity contributes to a high prevalence of childhood stunting, which has long-term consequences for health and development. Fortified complementary food supplements are a nutritional intervention designed to address nutrient deficiencies during the weaning period. This review aimed to synthesise evidence on the impact of a specific fortified complementary food supplement on linear growth, measured by length-for-age Z-score, in Malian infants aged 6–12 months from food-insecure households. A systematic literature review was conducted. Academic databases were searched for relevant studies, including randomised controlled trials and programme evaluations. Studies were selected against pre-defined inclusion criteria concerning population, intervention, and outcome. Data were extracted and the quality of evidence was appraised. The provision of the supplement was associated with a modest, statistically significant improvement in length-for-age Z-scores. A key finding was that the intervention appeared to attenuate the typical decline in linear growth observed during weaning. The most pronounced effect was seen in infants from the most severely food-insecure households. Fortified complementary food supplements can have a positive, though moderate, effect on linear growth in this vulnerable population. They are likely one necessary component of a broader strategy required to effectively combat stunting. Nutrition programmes should integrate these supplements within comprehensive public health strategies that also address sanitation, maternal education, and healthcare access. Further operational research is needed to optimise delivery mechanisms and identify cost-effective approaches for scaling up in similar contexts. Mali, infant, complementary feeding, food fortification, linear growth, stunting, nutrition intervention, food security. This review consolidates evidence on a specific nutritional intervention for a high-risk population, providing a summary for policymakers and identifying gaps for future research in public health practice.

Keywords: *Complementary feeding, Stunting, Food insecurity, Sub-Saharan Africa, Micronutrient fortification, Linear growth, Infant nutrition*

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