

Dame Deirdre Hutton
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Dear Dame Deirdre

Mandatory Fortification of flour with folic acid

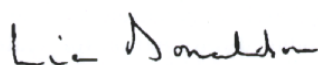
I am writing to you on behalf of UK CMOs with regard to FSA's recommendation to Health Ministers on mandatory fortification of flour in the UK. We congratulate SACN and the FSA Board for its in-depth and comprehensive consideration of the issue and agree that mandatory fortification is an effective measure to protect women of child-bearing age from NTD-affected pregnancies.

We understand both SACN and COC were able to consider preliminary data from a randomised – controlled trial and trends in cancer incidence in the US and Canada and stated that the evidence for increased risk of colo-rectal cancer was not conclusive. You may be aware that these studies have now been published. Whilst these data do not prove a causal link, they do raise some concern with regard to the exposure of older people and those with pre-malignant colo-rectal adenomas.

It is therefore important that before we advise Health Ministers, this recently published data on colo-rectal cancer risk is considered in depth. We recognise that this is a complex issue and are seeking further expert advice from SACN on the potential adverse effects of folic acid on CRC risk. I have asked Sheela Reddy from DH SACN secretariat to co-opt members with particular expertise in Cancer Epidemiology and Statistics. We suggest Professor Peter Boyle, who is the Director of International Agency for Research on Cancer and Professor Elio Riboli from Imperial College London, who is also an eminent Cancer Epidemiologist.

This further work may delay the decision on mandatory fortification but will help us to provide well-informed and balanced advice to Health Ministers.

Yours sincerely



SIR LIAM DONALDSON
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

From the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson



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