

14 October 2014

Hon Nathan Guy  
Minister for Primary Industries  
Office of the Chief Executive  
Level 8 Executive Wing  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

**Fortification of bread with folic acid**

Dear Minister

I am writing to you to express serious concerns by the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) in relation to progress towards the voluntary fortification of bread with folic acid.

Despite members of the baking industry signing a code of practice which has an ‘aspirational’ goal towards fortifying with folic acid a minimum of 25% and up to 50% by volume, of packaged sliced loaf breads, there has been no progress towards this goal. In fact, a May 2014 report by the New Zealand Association of Bakers suggested that even less bread was fortified with folic acid in 2013 (14%) compared with 2012 (17%).

Increasing a women’s intake of folic acid markedly reduces the risk of a baby with neural tube defects. The NZMA considers that the evidence overwhelmingly supports mandatory fortification of bread with folic acid. In light of poor progress to date towards the voluntary fortification of bread with folic acid, we urge the government to reconsider the current voluntary industry-led approach and replace it with a mandatory regime, as is currently the approach taken in over 70 countries, including Australia.

Please find enclosed the following recent publication in the New Zealand medical journal ‘*When enough is not enough: folic acid fortification in New Zealand*’ that elaborates on this important public health issue. We would be happy to provide you with further evidence to support the case for mandatory fortification of bread with folic acid.

Yours sincerely



Ms Lesley Clarke  
NZMA CEO