

Minister for Public Health and Sport
Maree Todd MSP



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Publication of the UK wide Bread and Flour Review consultation on the amendments to the Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and proposals for implementation of mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid

Dear Convenor,

As you are aware, Scottish Ministers have long advocated for the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid to reduce the risk of foetal neural tube defects. There is strong evidence that many foetal neural tube defects can be prevented by women increasing their intake of folic acid, prior to conception and until the 12th week of pregnancy.

Mandatory fortification is an effective way of reaching people with the lowest folate intakes, often younger women from the most socioeconomically deprived areas.

In September 2021, I wrote to you to advise that the Scottish Government would proceed with the mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid for Scotland on a UK four nation basis to help reduce the incidence of foetal neural tube defects.

At the same time, the UK Government and the devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland also announced their intention to proceed on this basis. I am writing to update you that since this time officials across the four nations have been working together to progress proposals for the introduction of new mandatory folic acid fortification requirements. These proposals are being progressed along with other proposed changes as part of the wider review of the existing [The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

I am pleased to confirm that Defra, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Wales and Northern Ireland (NI), issued a 12-week UK wide public consultation on 1st September to seek views on proposed amendments to the Bread and Flour Regulations including the introduction of mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid. <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/food-compositional-standards/bread-and-flour-consultation-2022>

The existing Bread and Flour regulations primarily provide for the longstanding compulsory addition of certain nutrients to non-wholemeal wheat flour to protect public health. Included in the consultation are proposals to make certain adjustments to these nutrients and additionally include folic acid fortification with the aim of improving public health outcomes for the Scottish population and in the wider context the UK population, support industry, assist enforcement authorities and protect consumers in Scotland and across the UK.

Post consultation, FSS will continue to work closely with officials across the four nations and any legislative changes following consultation will be implemented through separate statutory instruments in each of the four nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maree Todd', written in a cursive style.

MAREE TODD