

Men Sarun's largest flour and rice mill makes fortification top priority for bakery and noodles

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THE largest flour and rice mill in Cambodia, the Men Sarun complex, located about 15 kilometres up the Tonle Sap from Phnom Penh, has made fortification a top priority for the health of the Cambodian population – both in flour and the Mee Yeung brand of instant noodles.



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According to Linh Thorn, General Manager of the Men Sarun Flour Factory, 3,000 metric tons of wheat per month is processed into flour. The wheat arrives from both

Australia and the United States via Vietnam and up the Mekong where a crane unloads the white bags and workers toss them onto a conveyor belt into the mill.

The milling machines clean and peel the wheat, extracting the bran, which is the outer wheat husk, which is sold as animal feed for pigs, chicken and fish.

The flour is fortified with micronutrients through machines which release fixed amounts of the nutrients little by little as the flour is produced.

The adjacent Men Sarun Rice Mill, also Cambodia's largest, processes 30 metric tons of rice per hour and supplies both the Cambodian army and the general public with rice. Farmers are paid cash for their rice as it is delivered.

The flour factory produces three different types of flour, all of which is used for baking and each of which is identifiable by the particular type of bag it comes in. One is known as "Cluster", another called "Toy", which has a baker holding a platter of bread on the label, and the third is "Kangaroo", with a picture of a kangaroo on the label, which is used for instant noodles and bread, as well as bakery items like cake and croissants.

"We are very proud of our fortification," Linh said.

"We don't just focus on profit, but on the safety and health of the customer. We are proud to support Cambodian people with micronutrients."

The Men Sarun Flour Factory has carried out a pilot project in cooperation with an NGO called International Relief and Development along with the National Soybean Research Laboratory and WISHH, the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health. The result of the project is the fortified instant noodles of the Mee Prachnha brand which contain vitamin A, Thiamin, Riboflavin, vitamin B12, folic acid, iron and zinc, all of which are very helpful for the current situation in Cambodian health, especially for pregnant and nursing mothers and children.

With the addition of 10 percent soy flour in addition to wheat flour, the protein content of the Mee Prachna instant noodles is about 13.5 percent.

The factory produces an astonishing 7.5 million packages of Mee Yeung brand instant noodles per month, in four flavours: pork, beef, chicken and duck.

Factory manager Linh called on consumers to consider their health and choose fortified foods when possible.

“People must choose the right foods because their health is of the utmost importance,” he said.

Linh also called on the Cambodian government to quickly implement high food standard regulations for every food product produced or sold in Cambodia in order to protect the population.

“My request to the government is that they expedite the creation of high standards for every food so we can protect the health of our people. Every food should have a standard,” he said.

Linh worked for the IRD NGO before he joined Men Sarun Flour Factory three years ago. He has an MBA degree from the Singapore International Institute.

The Men Sarun Flour Factory has a new vertically-integrated milling plant now underway, capable of processing 500 metric tons every 24 hours.