

NutriLOC launches to advance locally driven solutions for child malnutrition in Africa

A new international research initiative is set to transform how child malnutrition is addressed in Africa: NutriLOC brings together a multidisciplinary consortium of partners from Africa and Europe to develop the next generation of locally produced therapeutic and supplementary foods. Combining scientific innovation, sustainability and local ownership, the project seeks to improve access to effective nutrition solutions while strengthening regional food systems and fostering long-term self-reliance in malnutrition management.

Helsinki, 1 September 2026 – The new international research and innovation project NutriLOC officially launches today, bringing together African and European experts and stakeholders committed to transforming the prevention and treatment of child malnutrition through locally driven, sustainable and evidence-based solutions. Funded through the European Union’s Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, the project has a budget of EUR 4 million over the next four years. NutriLOC is coordinated by the University of Helsinki and the project consortium will convene for its official kick-off meeting on 2–3 October 2026 in Accra, Ghana.

Malnutrition in children under five remains one of the world’s most urgent and persistent global health challenges and represents a direct violation of children’s rights. Despite decades of international efforts, coverage for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition remains critically low, often reaching fewer than 20% of affected children. At the same time, moderate acute malnutrition, which affects even larger numbers of children and frequently precedes severe acute malnutrition, continues to receive insufficient attention.

NutriLOC has been strategically designed to address these interconnected challenges by advancing innovative, locally adapted approaches to malnutrition management. The project aims to develop and scale up a new generation of therapeutic and supplementary foods that are:

- produced from locally available ingredients,
- non-dairy and nutritionally adequate,
- cost-effective and environmentally sustainable, and
- equitably accessible through national nutrition programmes.



The project focuses on improving and expanding the use of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTFs) and ready-to-use supplementary foods (RUSFs), while also introducing a new category of nutrition products: locally adapted fortified supplements (LAFSs).

To achieve this, NutriLOC will explore the use of spirulina and mycoprotein, which are emerging protein-rich ingredients already being produced in Kenya, together with other local ingredients such as locally sourced fish, legumes and cereals. By prioritising local production and supply chains, the project seeks not only to improve child nutrition outcomes but also to stimulate local economies and strengthen long-term self-reliance in malnutrition management across African countries.

Beyond product development, NutriLOC will generate evidence to inform future research, policy reforms, scale-up strategies and investment decisions in the nutrition sector. The project ultimately aims to catalyse a transformative shift in how malnutrition is addressed by aligning innovation, sustainability, equity and local ownership.

“NutriLOC represents an important step towards sustainable and locally led nutrition solutions that can improve the lives of vulnerable children while strengthening regional food systems and economies,” says Ndegwa H. Maina, Associate Professor in Food Chemistry at the University of Helsinki and Coordinator of the NutriLOC project.

The kick-off meeting in Accra will gather consortium partners from Finland, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone and the UK to establish the project’s roadmap and collaborative activities for the coming years.

Project Key Facts

Full Name: NutriLOC – Designing Sustainable, Locally Sourced Supplementary and Therapeutic Foods for Emergency Nutrition

Start Date: 1st September 2026

Duration: 48 months

Budget: €4 million

Coordinator: University of Helsinki, Finland

Website: www.nutriloc.africa

LinkedIn: [NutriLOC](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nutriloc)

Project Partners

Finland

- University of Helsinki
- VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland



**Funded by
the European Union**

Germany

- EURICE - European Research and Project Office GmbH

Ghana

- University of Ghana
- Project Peanut Butter Company Ltd. Ghana

Kenya

- Essential Impact Ltd.
- Kenyatta University
- University of Eldoret

Sierra Leone

- Project Peanut Butter Company Ltd. Sierra Leone

United Kingdom

- Emergency Nutrition Network

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