

Right Diet will Help Reduce Disease Burden in India: Harsh Vardhan

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“The right kind of diet will help to reduce the disease burden in the country”. This was stated by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare while inaugurating the second edition of the ‘Eat Right Mela’ at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium. He stressed upon the importance of having a Jan Andolan, a peoples’ movement, encouraging people to have healthier diets which will help in reduction of the disease burden in the country.

Dr. Vardhan said the Eat Right Mela of FSSAI is a commendable effort and outreach activity for citizens to push them towards eating right. “Let the ‘Eat Right Melas’ be part of public gatherings such as local melas, community programs etc., so that the people can learn about health & nutrition benefits of different types of food, dietary advice by experts, engage in dialogues & conversations with food visionaries and experts, enjoy delicious street food, live demonstration of food recipes & have fun and entertainment.

He highlighted that “India, on one side, is suffering from under-nourishment resulting in infirmities like wasting and stunting and on the other side, there is another critical area of concern to be addressed i.e. obesity, that is apparently the result of excessive consumption of junk food, wrong choices of food, overeating & lack of exercise. At the same time, the rise of diet related diseases suggests that people are eating less healthy food than they were eating a decade ago. In this context, the movement of ‘Eat Right India’ was started by FSSAI is a timely initiative”.

The Union Minister also launched ‘The Purple Book’ a handbook on diets for diseases. The book offers general guidelines for hospitals on suitable diets for common medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension, cancer, gut disorders and so on in a simple format and has been developed and vetted by experts in the field of food & nutrition.

Dr. Vardhan also launched NetSCoFAN (Network for Scientific Co-operation for Food Safety & Applied Nutrition), a network of research & academic institutions working in the area of food & nutrition along with the NetSCoFAN directory, covering detailed information of various heads/Directors and lead scientists of lead and associated partnering institutions. The NetSCoFAN would comprise of 8 groups of institutions working in different areas viz.

biological, chemical, nutrition & labelling, food of animal origin, food of plant origin, water & beverages, food testing, and safer & sustainable packaging.

FSSAI has identified 8 Nodal Institutions who will develop a 'Ready Reckoner' that will have inventory of all research work, experts & institutions and carry out and facilitate research, survey & related activities. It would identify research gaps in respective areas and collect, collate and develop database on food safety issues for risk assessment activities. "The need for identify research gaps in respective areas and collect, collate and develop database on food safety issues for risk assessment activities, will be addressed by NetSCoFAN", Dr. Vardhan said.

He emphasised the importance of 'Save Food Share Food'. "Let's develop the habit of not wasting food, and sharing food with those who are needy", he said. At the event, M/s Elan Professional Private Limited (ElanPro) through their CSR program declared to support Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) members to ensure the food collected is held at optimum temperature that will help to reduce travel and distribution time under the 'Save Food Share Food' initiative of FSSAI. Presently, 84 food recovery agencies are associated with IFSA network under FSSAI.