

Food and Drugs Administration department in Pune initiates food fortification in state

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Jan 24, 2019



Manufacturers being trained, and explained to, about intricacies of fortification at a training workshop in the city on Wednesday.(HT/PHOTO)

The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) department in Pune has initiated an action plan to fortify staple foods, including wheat, rice, milk and oil in the city.

The objective is to provide 'vitamin loaded' and 'micronutrient-rich food' to the people through the process of food fortification.

Suresh Deshmukh, commissioner FDA, Pune said, "We are the first FDA in Maharashtra to take up such an initiative."

The FDA is organising training workshops for food suppliers and manufacturers to popularise the process of fortification. A pilot workshop for manufacturers was held on January 18 to explain this process.

Food safety officials have also been trained to create awareness about food fortification among manufacturers.

The pilot workshop was organised by FDA, Pune under the guidance of Pune's guardian minister Girish Bapat, who is FDA minister of state. The technical support was provided by non-

government organisations (NGOs) such as Global Alliance Improved Nutrition (GAIN), an international NGO and Vatsalya.

Training workshops in the fortification of milk and edible oil will be followed with similar workshops on fortification of wheat flour, rice and other flour products that are consumed daily. “The basic idea is to eradicate blood-related disorders, especially anaemia and vitamin deficiencies, especially A and D which is most commonly seen among people,” Deshmukh said. These deficiencies resulted from improper diet, lack of nutritious food and poor exposure to sunlight, he said.

He pointed out that the poor intake of vitamins A and D were resulting in brittle bones, bone-related disorders and poor eyesight among children.

KK Yadav, project manager, GAIN and Vatsalya which is providing technical support and training in this project, said, “For the fortification of five metric tonne milk, only a 100 ml bottle of premix vitamin A and vitamin D is needed. The fortification process is carried out before the packaging of the products.”

Fortified foods can be identified with the logo ‘+F’ on the top of the packet, Deshmukh said.

What is food fortification?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes food fortification as the intentional inclusion of micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.