

FCI asked to prepare comprehensive plan for fortified rice distribution

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Special focus to be given to 112 aspirational districts under Integrated Child Development Services and Mid-Day Meal scheme

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been asked to prepare a comprehensive plan to procure and distribute fortified rice in all districts under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme from the next financial year, an official release said on Tuesday.

Special focus would be given to 112 aspirational districts identified by NITI Aayog, decided a meeting convened by the Department of Food and Public Distribution Secretary on Monday, following a review last Saturday of a pilot scheme on rice fortification launched last year by Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal.

If all aspirational districts are to be covered, there is a need to scale up supply of fortified rice kernels (FRK) to 1.3 lakh tonnes from the existing 15,000 tonnes per annum. FRK is mixed with non-fortified rice at a ratio ranging from 1:50 to 1:200. For public distribution system (PDS), ICDS and MDM in these 112 districts, the amount of rice needed is around 130 lakh tonnes.

If the entire PDS in the country is to be covered under rice fortification, the quantity of rice needed is around 350 lakh tonnes, which would require an uninterrupted supply pipeline of around 3.5 lakh tonnes of FRK from the industry.

There are nearly 28,000 rice mills in the country that need to be equipped with blending machines for mixing of FRK with normal rice. FCI has been asked to tie up with rice mills in different regions for necessary investment in this regard.

Operational readiness would help in successful scaling up of procurement and supply of fortified rice in a phased manner from 2021-2022 onwards, the release said.

Even though one district each in 15 predominantly rice-eating States was selected for the pilot scheme, only five States — Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh — have launched the scheme in the identified districts. The ₹174.6-crore pilot was to be for three years, covering 15 districts across the country.