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Beneficiaries in 15 districts to start getting fortified rice rich in nutrients by year end

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NEW DELHI: The poor living in 15 districts - one district each in 15 states - including in Naxal-affected Garhchiroli in Maharashtra, Narmada in Gujarat, Chandauli in Uttar Pradesh and Ernakulam in Kerala will start getting subsidised rice, rich with added vitamin and minerals by the year end.

The fortified rice will be made available to the beneficiaries under National Food Security scheme after the next kharif crop arrives in mandis in October this year, Union food minister Ram Vilas Paswan said. Sources said the pilot will be limited to only 15 districts considering that government will have to put extra effort to fortify the rice in the milling stage and will have to put a proper supply chain in place.

Paswan said so far nine states have provided the list of districts where they want the pilot to start and his ministry has asked the remaining six states to send the names of districts. Food secretary Ravi Kant said the rice will get added vitamins such as A and B12 besides minerals such as iron and zinc. Fortification is a complementary strategy to fight malnutrition.

The government has allocated Rs 147.6 crore for this pilot run for the next three years. "We will bear the entire cost involved for fortification of rice, roughly 60 paise per kg. It will have huge impact on the poor who suffer from malnutrition," said a food ministry official. Ministries of women and child development and human resources development have been providing rice fortified with nutritious elements in Anganwadi centres and mid-day meal scheme at some places.

PILOT PROJECT

IDENTIFIED DISTRICTS FOR FORTIFIED RICE DISTRIBUTION

Garhchiroli (Maharashtra), **Godavari** (Andhra Pradesh), **Narmada** (Gujarat), **Chandili** (UP), **Bongaigaon** (Assam), **Yadgir/ Raichur** (Karnataka), **Ernakulam** (Kerala), **Tiruchirapalli** (Tamil Nadu) & **Malkangiri/ Nuapada** (Odisha)

Status of ration cards (National)

Total ration cards

23,18,46,416

Aadhaar seeding

85.41%

Number of fair price shops

5,34,911

Fair price shops with e-PoS machines **4,12,050 (77.03%)**

Digitised
100%

► Interoperability of using ration card to be rolled out in Maharashtra-Gujarat & Andhra Pradesh-Telangana from Aug, 2019

In his first media interaction after being elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha, Paswan said his ministry has set June 30, 2020 as the deadline for rolling out One Nation One Ration Card across the country. This system of interoperability of ration cards will be rolled out in Andhra Pradesh-Telangana and Gujarat-Maharashtra from August. This means beneficiaries in Andhra Pradesh can buy grain in Telangana and vice-versa. It will be similar for beneficiaries from Gujarat and Maharashtra.

“We have taken this impactful decision within a month of people voting Narendra Modi for the second consecutive time. Once the online system is put in place, people can even buy a share of allocated foodgrains at one place and if some members of the same family migrated to any other other, they also can get the remaining quantity from where they reside. It will be seamless. The three pre-requisites are - states will have to link their database of ration cards to the central depository, the fair price shops concerned will need to have electronic point of sale (ePOS) machines and the beneficiaries would have to verify using Aadhaar number,” the minister said.

Only in such cases Aadhaar authentication is necessary to avoid misuse of the mechanism. Paswan had told Rajya Sabha that no beneficiary will be denied subsidised grains for want of Aadhaar at designated fair price shop, if he/ she produces one of the proofs that people use to cast their votes.

Officials said the one-year timeline has been fixed considering the time required to achieve 100% coverage of ePOS machines and complete Aadhaar seeding of ration cards across the country.