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Press Release

Fortification of Edible Oil with Vitamin A and D to be Considered Mandatory

New Delhi, Sept. 25, 2020: India has a very high burden of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies. A huge population in our country suffer from deficiency of vitamin A and D. Lack of these vitamins in our body can have adverse impact on morbidity, mortality, productivity and economic growth. Vitamin A and D also strengthen the immune system, which is critical in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

A national webinar on ***Edible Oil Fortification: From Commitment to Action*** was facilitated today to discuss key operational areas as well as challenges in this direction. It was jointly hosted by the Food Fortification Resource Centre under the Food Safety Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) in association with GAIN. Several representatives from the Government, Development partners, Academia and Edible oil industry players had participated in this webinar.

During his opening remarks, Shri Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI announced that *“FSSAI is considering to make it mandatory to fortify edible oil with vitamin A and D, so that people of India can enjoy better immunity with good health. This will ensure that people belonging to different socio-economic strata will have easy access to fortified edible oil across the country”*. To facilitate the industry, the Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC) within FSSAI will also provide the necessary technical support required to enable fortification of edible oil at the industry level, Singhal highlighted.

Development sector organisations like GAIN along with FFRC have been working together with oil industry to build their capacities for producing quality assured edible oil fortified with vitamin A and D. At present, 69% (7.94 MMT/annum edible oil) of packaged edible oil sold across pan-India is fortified. Now is the time to scale up the edible oil fortification, across the country, to improve nutrition and health status of Indian population.

Tarun Vij, Country Director, GAIN emphasized that *“The Government’s mandate for scaling-up the process of edible oil fortification should go hand in hand with building capacities of the industry for producing quality assured edible oil fortified with vitamin A and D”*. Citing the example of Rajasthan where fortification of edible oil is being done since 2011, Mr. Vij further highlighted that there is a substantial reduction in the vitamin A deficiency among children (10-19 years) i.e., 1.9% against the national average of 15.6%, CNNS 2018-19. Perhaps, the State wide production and availability of edible oil fortified with vitamin A and vitamin D has positively contributed towards this change.

In the webinar, discussions were held on the current scenario of edible oil fortification in India and further need for scaling-up the process with sufficient measures for quality assurance and control. Emphasis was also laid on providing the support to edible oil industry for adopting proper processes, building the capacity of premix suppliers to produce quality premixes, and upgrading the State food laboratory ecosystem for proper testing at the large scale.

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