

Fortifying Health

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) –under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare – has put in place robust regulatory standards for food fortification to reduce micronutrient deficiencies and fulfil its mandate of building a healthy future for the country.



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Eating well is the first step to enable our bodies to function optimally. To quote Mahatma Gandhi, “It is health that is real and not pieces of gold.” A balanced diet that is safe and hygienic is the key to wholesome health, longevity and overall wellbeing of human beings. FSSAI leading the Eat Right India movement, a collective movement of all stakeholders in the food sector to transform India's food ecosystem. This movement is focused on three key themes- Eat Safe, Eat Healthy and Eat Sustainable to improve the health of the people and the planet. This movement is aligned with the Government's flagship public health programmes such as Poshan Abhiyaan, Ayushman Bharat Yojana, and Swachh Bharat Mission.

A critical component of Eat Healthy is large-scale fortification of food to address widespread micronutrient deficiencies in the country. For this, FSSAI has taken various steps to promote it in Government safety net programmes as well as the open market. FSSAI has brought into force Regulations for fortification of food as a rallying point for all stakeholders to take it forward, spearheaded advocacy efforts within Government Ministries and departments, introduced measures for quality control of fortified foods such as testing of fortificants, training and capacity building of food businesses and testing and regulatory staff and

promoted the health benefits of fortified foods among consumers through large-scale social and behaviour change campaigns.



For consumer awareness, a TV commercial called, “Dekha Kya +F?” starring Sakshi Tanwar, actress has been launched and aired nationwide. Several short videos for public awareness have been created for all five commodities. In her words, Sakshi Tanwar, famous television actor and household name says “Take responsibility of your health and diet. Just remember to read the +F sign whenever you pick up atta, rice, oil, milk and salt. So I will come and ask you Dekha Kya, +F?”

Key Achievements of Fortification Regulations

- After operationalising the Food Fortification Regulations in 2016, FSSAI gazette notified the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulation on August 2, 2018 for five key staples like oil and milk (with Vitamin A and D), wheat flour and rice (with iron, folic acid and vitamin B 12), and double fortified salt (with iodine and iron).
- +F logo was released as unique identification for fortified products.
- Presently, 157 brands of five fortified staples are available in the open market with a pan India and regional presence.
- There has been tremendous traction in the oil and milk industry, with 47 per cent of top ten players of packaged refined edible oil industry and 36.6 per cent of the organized milk industry fortifying as per FSSAI standards.
- FSSAI is now moving towards mandatory fortification of milk and oil.



Government Food Safety Net Programmes

- Various ministries such as that of Women and Child Development; Human Resource Development (Department of Education and Literacy), Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution have issued directives and advisories for mandatory fortification of these five staples.
- Various states have adopted fortification of several commodities across the government safety net programmes (SNP) namely Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-day Meal (MDM) and Public Distribution System (PDS).
- Endorsement for +F logo has been done through FOSCOS licensing and registration system along.
- For quality control SOPs for premix suppliers and Fortified Rice Kernel (FRK) manufacturers have been introduced.

Training and Capacity Building

- FSSAI provides online training to Food Safety Officers (FSOs) and Food Business Operators (FBOs) on the process of food fortification across commodities.
- FSSAI-notified 48 NABL lab personnel have been trained on testing of micronutrients in oil, milk, and wheat flour, and sensitisation workshops have been held for 127 store in-charges of Kendriya Bhandar.
- FSSAI has set up the first fortified food store on e-retail and a separate category of fortified staples on the Amazon website.



Moving towards a 'Malnutrition-Free India'

The food fortification programme launched by FSSAI assumes significance against the backdrop of increasing burden of widespread deficiencies of vitamins and minerals as a complementary

strategy to dietary diversification and nutrient supplementation.

Milk and oil fortification has gained considerable traction in the open market, which led to the decision of mandatory fortification of both the commodities in the near future. The dosages for fortification have been issued; quality assurance parameters and laboratories for testing of these commodities have been identified. There are provisions for capacity building of the FBOs, who are engaged in the process of fortification. A dedicated resource centre is available to extend end-end technical support. With all these provisions in place, we believe that smoother implementation across the country can be seen in the coming months.

This programme is a crucial tool to bring a change through a judicious mix of regulatory measures, combined with soft interventions for ensuring awareness and capacity building of food businesses and citizens alike. It aims to sensitise stakeholders and people at large towards addressing malnutrition and intensifying the campaign towards a 'Malnutrition-Free India'. As a part of the Eat Right India movement, it empowers citizens to consume safe and nutritious food with a view to prevent diseases and lead healthy and happy lives. **NS**