

Interactive Session on Fortification and Meeting of National Alliance for Edible Oil Fortification

Today micronutrient malnutrition in India is putting a significant section of the population, particularly women and children at the risk of under-nutrition and poor health outcomes. Micronutrient malnutrition, results from vitamin and mineral deficiencies and often goes unnoticed, even by those affected. Over the years, the harmful effects of these vitamin and mineral deficiencies have been realized and are now seen as a pressing public health challenge across the globe.

The Indian Food Industry is cognizant of this fact and have been in the process of undertaking product innovation that includes micronutrient fortification of food products, ranging from staples that are consumed widely across income groups to processed varieties. Fortification is identified as an effective mechanism to address the micronutrient gaps in regular diets.

With this background, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has collaborated with Global Alliance for Improving Nutrition (GAIN) to launch an initiative on **National Edible Oil Fortification**. This project aims at building consensus around fortification as an Industry-led initiative and generate evidence on the merits of business led expansion of fortified edible oil portfolio.

There lies merit in pursuing edible oil fortification in India given the mass penetration of the commodity and also its effectiveness in addressing some of the challenges related to nutrition security. This project will entail engagement with various stakeholders to build a consensus on taking forward the agenda of large scale fortification of edible oils.

Mr. Siraj Chaudhary, Chairman of National Alliance for Edible Oil Fortification and Chairman Cargill India, encongaging know that separate effort of GAIN and CII on fortification and a reason for us to collaborate and make a bigger impact .He rightly said that it is not an effort of one industry,one person or one organization ,but it requires a collective effort of the public and private sector ,stake holders , industries ,institutions ,orgnaizations.Outreaching the state governments in India for fortification of food.

Dr. Jee Rah,UNICEF, points to the fact that globally 2 billion people ,particularly women and children are affected by micronutrient deficiencies.In context to micronutrient deficiency,she mentions that food fortification is the cost effective invention and to move forward the agenda of food fortification ,support for supply and demand are the key requirements .therefore outreaching the state governments and the customers is the best way to create supply and demand.

Dr. Jee Rah introduce “Poshtik”,the food fortification network developed in India in 2013 to interact and communicate in order to promote food fortification.

Dr Meenakshi Singh,Scientist (Standards),FSSAI, She mentions that based on the request ,the task force groups on food fortification are examining the possibility to fortify the basic staple foods like edible oil ,rice,milk etc. She also mentions that the industry are the key players in recognizing the consumers perspective towards fortified foods.

Dr. Rajan Sankar, GAIN, has shared some of the food fortification studies with the FACE. He mentions that food fortification is not a new idea ,it was practiced since 20th century for fats. Towards the stability of the Vitamin A in the edible oil, he explains that during normal cooking practice, only 15-19% of the added Vitamin A is lost but repeated frying can account upto 50% of the loss.

He shared brief of many important studies; Sustain Oil Reports, Philippines – Fortification of Margarine with Vitamin A, Indonesia-Fortification of Vitamin A, Study done by School of Public health Harvard and world bank to come up with the global burden due to diseases.

The discussions and deliberations at the meeting aimed at promoting the food fortification in India and the next step will be taking the solution of micronutrient deficiency as fortification to the state governments and implementing standards for fortification. Afterwards ,partnership with the local producers to take forward the initiative.

Ms Meetu Kapur,Executive Director,CII-FACE, will explore collaborating with UNICEF, with the initiative to link up with “Poshtik” ,food fortification network with the National Alliance for Edible oil Fortification and work with consumer affairs ministry and spreading awareness of fortification through consumer awareness campaign .

The meeting saw participation of over 35 participation from public and private sector ,NGOs , government bodies like the Food Safety and Standards Act of India, UNICEF, Central food technological research institute, GAIN,USSEC,Partnership for safe medicine India, Bunge India, Marico Ltd, ITC,Dabur,Ruchi Soya industries,Reliance Dairy foods Ltd. And among others.