

## **Fortification – A mechanism to address Micronutrient Malnutrition**

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Consultation on Food Fortification, held in Mumbai on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2015, the **National Alliance for Edible Oil Fortification** (NAOF) reiterated its commitment to work towards creating an enabling environment for voluntary fortification, with the broader objective of meeting the nutrition requirements of the Indian population.

Towards achieving this objective, the NAOF will work on a three pronged approach:

- first create awareness of fortified foods (including edible oil) in partnership with consumer organizations;
- second leverage fortification as a complementary strategy to deliver needed micro-nutrients to the population in partnership with state governments and share best practices among states; and
- third - create an enabling environment for industry to launch fortified foods to address consumer needs.

While addressing the forum Mr. Siraj Chaudhry, Chairman National Alliance for Edible oil Fortification & Chairman - Cargill India Pvt. Ltd, said that “although a self-sufficient food producer, India is home to one quarter of the world’s hungry, and an estimated 40% of the country’s children are malnourished. The prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world, accounting for nearly one-third of the world’s growth-stunted youth. Micronutrient fortification of food items commonly consumed can be a powerful strategy to combat micronutrient deficiencies in a sustainable manner.

When Cargill India pioneered the efforts of fortifying its edible oils way back in 2008, in addition to creating a new competitive advantage for Cargill in the Indian market, fortification helped provide essential vitamins (A, D and E) to over 30 million people across the nation and supported nation’s battle with malnourishment. Over time, the innovation has motivated competing brands to fortify their oil offerings, too—a market-wide change that Cargill welcomes. Knowing it will help more Indians recover from chronic vitamin deficiency, it was a competitive advantage we were quite happy to lose. He further congratulated CII & GAIN for providing a platform where all stakeholders could come together and build the roadmap for nutritional security.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ashim Sanyal, COO, Voluntary Organization appreciated CII & GAIN joint efforts on fortification and stated that such initiatives are in the Interest of Consumer and society at large. He reiterated VOICE ‘s association and support in this effort.

Mr. Salil Kumar, Manager India operations, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition mentioned that “the GAIN-CII national oil project is a credit to the willingness and dedication shown by the Indian Edible Oil Industry. Industry partners have

identified a unique opportunity to grow and sustain the oil business in India and at the same time considerably contribute to the reduction of vitamin and mineral deficiencies in our country. I am proud to be able to call them our partners in this huge effort.”

Mr. Lakshman Sethuraman, Senior Manager, TATA Trust Shared their efforts on curtailing malnutrition through staple food Fortification in states across India “For fortification to be sustainable we need effective communication strategies to create aspiration among consumers supported with credible evidence” he added.

Earlier Ms Meetu Kapur, Executive Director, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) shared that “CII is working on a comprehensive agenda towards positioning India as the ‘Food Factory’ to the world through catalyzing investments, encouraging adequate farm gate infrastructure and making food processing an integral part of the inclusive growth strategy. Taking forward the CII GAIN project, the NAOF will explore collaborating with potential partners, to create an enabling environment for voluntary fortification.

Mr Satendra Aggarwal, Chief Operating Officer, Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd, appreciated the CII and Gain initiative and assured Ruchi Soya’s continued efforts towards fortifying their range of products. He added that “partnerships and support to industry will encourage efforts on fortification in the country”

In the Indian context for regulation of food fortification, the government has come out with guidelines on food fortification for Government-run programmes like the Public Distribution System (PDS) under Ministry of Consumer affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the Integrated Child and Development Services (ICDS) under Ministry of Women & Child Development, and many other such schemes. These are some of the avenues that offer ready opportunity for micronutrient interventions.

Access to affordable, safe, and efficacious fortified foods is hence a good way to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition that will transform the food and nutritional security landscape in the country.

The Session was attended by representatives from Tata Trust, Edible Oil manufacturers, Technical Intuitions like ICAR, Consumer Organizations and stakeholders from the industry.