

FSSAI initiates year-long campaign Eat Right India

By **Dibyajyoti Sarma** 16 Sep 2019

It's time for India to Eat Right, with Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union minister of health and family welfare kick-starting POSHAN Maah 2019 with a year-long social and mass media campaign on the Eat Right India movement on 5 September 2019. Leading with one tweet-a-day focusing on a weekly theme of eating right for the next 365 days, Dr Harsh Vardhan also launched the new Eat Right India logo that represents a healthy plate, an online Eat Right Quiz, the Eat Right Online Course for frontline health workers and the Eat Right India Store, featuring merchandise to nudge right eating habits.



Dr Harsh Vardhan (centre), Union minister of health and family welfare, along with the others during the event

The Eat Right India movement is being helmed by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as a crucial preventive healthcare measure to trigger social and behavioural change through a judicious mix of regulatory measures, combined with soft interventions for ensuring awareness and capacity building of food businesses and citizens alike. This movement is aligned with the government's flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukht Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission.

The FSSAI has put in place robust regulatory measures under three major pillars: Eat Safe, Eat Health and Eat Sustainably. FSSAI has prescribed a limit for total polar compounds (TPC) at 25% in cooking oil to avoid the harmful effects of reused cooking oil.

Standards for five fortified staples — wheat flour, rice, oil, milk and salt to reduce large-scale deficiencies of vitamins and minerals have been notified, in addition to standards for health supplements, nutraceuticals, prebiotics and probiotics products.

To trigger informed consumer choices regulations on 'advertising and claims' and mandatory menu labelling has been notified. In addition, labelling provisions have been made for appropriate use of sweeteners for children and pregnant women.

To reach the target of Trans-fat Free India by 2022, regulations to reduce trans-fats to less than 2% in all oils, fats and food products are in place.

Promoting sustainability, FSSAI has removed the restriction on the use of returnable bottles and is promoting the use of bamboo instead of plastics.

Preparatory work for creating awareness around mindful eating is also in place, with pilots/ prototypes for clusterisation schemes such as clean street food hubs, clean and fresh fruit and vegetable markets and eat right campus for schools, colleges, workplaces and other campuses being successfully tested on a pan-India basis.

Food businesses have participated in large-scale training and capacity building programmes on ensuring food safety through the Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) initiative, under which over 1.7-lakh food safety supervisors have been trained and certified. Robust material in the form of Pink Book, Yellow Book, DART Book, informative videos etc are in place, and can be accessed through a video library on FSSAI's website.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Harsh Vardhan, said Eat Right India takes a holistic approach to food habits that promote health and sustainability. He said like Green Good Deeds, a campaign to protect the environment and promote good living in the country, has found global acceptance, the Eat Right India movement is also poised to become a global best practice with the support of national and international stakeholders.

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, regional director, World Health Organization (WHO), said, "The Eat Right India movement's message is close to the heart of what the WHO has been saying all along. Now, this has been put into action by FSSAI. There has been a shift in the cause of mortality from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancer and so on, not only in India, but also across the world. The four main factors to prevent non-communicable diseases are healthy diet, physical exercise, avoidance of tobacco and alcohol. Therefore, the message of 'Eat Right' should be promoted everywhere."