

FSSAI Organises National Consultation On Milk Fortification

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by BW Online Bureau

The growing concern of micronutrient deficiencies in India can be strategically addressed through the cost effective, scientifically proven, globally recognized strategy - Food Fortification. Milk fortified with key micronutrients namely Vitamin A and D from vegetarian source is an effective way to deliver these key micronutrients to the population without changing their dietary pattern. Milk industry in India is spread out as 30% of the organized sector and 70% of the unorganised sector. Since the operationalization of standards for fortification by FSSAI, 21.53% of milk in the organized sector is fortified. Currently approximately, 78 LLPD of milk is getting fortified through 13 State Dairy Cooperatives, reaching 52 million people across country and around 15 LLPD of fortified milk through private dairies. To encourage fortification of staples, FSSAI has recently issued Gazette notification of Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2018 dated 2nd August 2018. The new standards have a range of limits with a lower and upper limit of Vitamin A and D.

In order to scale up milk fortification, Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC), FSSAI in collaboration with TATA Trusts and NDDB held a 'National Consultation on Milk Fortification' on

September 5th, 2018 at Vivanta by Taj - Ambassador, New Delhi. The objective of the consultation was to encourage larger number of dairies in India to adopt milk fortification. As part of the consultation, the early adopters of milk fortification were also felicitated. Amongst private dairies, Creamline Dairy Products Ltd received felicitation as an early adopter among private dairy sector with a capacity of 2LLPD. One of the leading milk brands in Delhi, Mother Dairy pioneered milk fortification by fortifying approximately 30LLPD of their pouch milk and bulk vending milk across Delhi NCR and other regions. Jharkhand Milk Federation and Maahi Milk Producer Company were also felicitated for their outstanding work and success of milk fortification.

Private players such as Chanakya Dairy, VRS Foods (Paras Dairy), Heritage Foods, Creamline Dairy, Kwality Foods, Hatson Agro product, Britannia, Nestle, Dairy Power Ltd, Goma Foods Pvt Ltd, Sunfresh Agro Industries Pvt Ltd, Milk Mantra are the brands which have proactively adopted fortification and launched fortified milk in the open market. Some major cooperatives like Orissa State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Ltd., Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Dairy Federation Ltd., Jharkhand State Cooperative Milk Producers Federation Ltd. and Bihar State Milk Co-operative Federation Ltd. have also shown a remarkable work in last few months.

The consultation brought together around 35 private dairies and 10 State Cooperatives. An open house discussion around food fortification as a strategy, cost of fortification, sources of vitamin fortificants, quality testing and monitoring related issues. Shri Pawan Aggarwal, CEO, FSSAI addressed aspects while laying emphasis upon certain facts. The regulator assured that the standards for fortification are set by a scientific panel of eminent scientists having decades of experience in the sector. The levels of fortificants have been fine-tuned basis the scientific evidence. Also, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the Indian population, the fortificants are obtained only from vegetarian source. About the cost of fortification, it is minimal for all the commodities and specially for milk which is 2 paise/ litre is easily bearable by the industry. A lot of dairy cooperatives and private players have not hiked their prices post fortification. Fortification is a tried and tested strategy in other countries having successful results. Fortified foods provide only 25 - 30% RDAs and therefore, is a complimentary strategy in addition to dietary diversification and supplementation. One of the leading weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal 'The Lancet' has also endorsed fortification as one of the most effective strategy to combat micronutrient malnutrition.

Making an addition to the existing enabling environment, the regulator recently introduced the process of 'Endorsement for fortification'. It is a simple process based on self-compliance wherein FBOs fortifying their product, shall undertake an endorsement by logging into the Food Licensing Registration System (FLRS) with their existing username and obtain an endorsement. The step was well appreciated by the industry members.

The consultation ended with all the participating milk processors assuring their support to achieve increased percentage of fortified milk by the end of this year.