

Renewed focus on nutrition, health, immunity, sustainability, meet told

Friday, 23 October, 2020, 13 : 00 PM [IST]

Our Bureau, New Delhi

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, presided over an event to celebrate 'World Food Day'. It was organised by FSSAI. This year's theme is 'Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together.' Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, joined the programme through video conference.

The minister stated that due to the unprecedented challenges faced by the world on account of the pandemic, there has been a renewed focus on food, nutrition, health, immunity and sustainability. He added, "FSSAI's Eat Right India movement targets to promote safe and healthy food for everyone in an environmentally sustainable way. It is a part of its mandate to provide safe and wholesome food for all citizens. This will improve the food safety ecosystems and lift the hygiene and health of our citizens."

A key focus this year is elimination of trans fats from the food supply chain. A food toxin present in Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils (PHVOs) (e.g. vanaspati, shortening, margarine and so on), baked and fried foods, Trans fats are major contributor to the rise in non-communicable diseases in India.

The minister stated, "Trans fat is a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Eliminating CVD risk factor is especially relevant during Covid-19 as people with CVD are predisposed to have serious conditions having an impact on mortality."

He reminded everyone of the government's effort to make India trans fats-free by 2022, a year ahead of WHO's target, in synergy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a new India on 75 years of the country's Independence.

Reiterating the game changing potential of 'Eat Right India' and 'Fit India Movement', the minister said, "These two movements along with Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission and other efforts of the Environment Ministry will improve the health of Indians and heal the environment."

Expressing his amazement at the marvels of the Internet where curious citizens can look up things on the whole gamut of information available, he asked officials of FSSAI to promote awareness and consumer education leveraging technology so that informed citizens can make responsible choices.

He launched the Eat Right Creativity Challenge for schools which is a poster and photography competition and aims to promote healthy dietary habits. He also launched the 'Eat Smart City' (challenge) by FSSAI in partnership with Smart City Mission and The Food Foundation, UK, which will create an environment of right food practices and habits in India's smart cities and can set an example for other cities to follow.

The minister launched a number of books/guidelines on the occasion:

- The Food Safety and Hygiene Guidelines for Safe Reopening of School Canteen/Mess- document that highlights the best practices to be followed in the 'New normal of Covid-19' by all the stakeholders. It also includes tips on personal and environmental hygiene and common myths with their clarifications.
- The 'Do you Eat Right?' book which will help in translating the technical concepts on food and nutrition and Eat Right initiatives into simple conventional style for the general public.
- The 'Orange Book' for Eat Right Campus that will serve as a resource guide to implement the mandatory food safety and hygiene requirements in campus canteens, ensure provision of healthy and environmentally sustainable food and build awareness among the individuals in workplaces, colleges, universities, institutions, hospitals and so on across the country.
- Daily Recommendations and Food Fortification- A handbook for states launched by FSSAI that will provide answers to the prime concerns around food fortification to state government officials. It will further elaborate the difference in the average consumption of micronutrients such as Vitamin A, Vitamin D, iron, folic acid and Vitamin B12 in a regular diet when compared with inclusion of fortified staples in everyday meals.

Rajesh Bhushan, Union Health Secretary, Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI, and other senior officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and FSSAI were present at the event. State Food Safety Commissioners, Regional Directors and officers of FSSAI, Professionals of Scientific Panel of Oils and Fats, Officials of International Public Health Organisations; WHO, World Bank, Vital Strategies, Members of NeProFaN- Network of Professionals of Food and Nutrition, prominent food business corporates, industry associations, implementation partners, development partners for food fortification were also invited to attend the event through video-conference.