



Food Fortification Resource Centre

5th Zonal Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Large-Scale Food Fortification North Eastern Region, Guwahati, Assam 15th February 2017

The fifth multi-stakeholder consultation for large-scale food fortification for the North Eastern States was held in Guwahati, Assam on 15th February 2017. The event was jointly organised by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



Mr. Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI set the context the Consultation by highlighting the need for large-scale food fortification in India, particularly the North Eastern region. Mr. Ram Muivah, represented the North Eastern Council as their Secretary, Mr. Samir Kumar Sinha, Commissioner and Secretary represented the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Assam and Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Joint Secretary represented the Ministry of Women and Child Development. They jointly emphasized the need for the North Eastern region to take the lead in large-scale food fortification across the country.

Distinguished delegates included representatives from the industry, development partners, academia, Government and civil society. Dr. Kajal Debnath from Mother Dairy, Ms. Veena Sharma from the Roller Flour Mill Federation, Mr. Tarun Vij and Ms. Deepti Gulati from Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Dr. Shariqua Yunus from World Food Program (WFP), Mr. Ganesh Iyer from Tata Trusts, Dr. Premaramachandran from Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI), Dr. Sirimavo Nair from M.S. University, Baroda, Mr. M.A. Ansari, former Salt Commissioner and Mr. Ashim Sanyal from Consumer VOICE all of them briefed the audience on the way forward to implement food fortification for each of the five food commodities-wheat flour, rice, edible oil, milk and edible salt. Mr. Sahu shared the State experience from Odisha on rice fortification in the mid-day meal programme.

This was followed by a discussion with all the representatives from the industry, government and academia from each of the North Eastern States to address their queries, offer them guidance and technical support from development partners to motivate and enable the Government representatives to take up fortification in their respective state.

ACTION POINTS

1. Assam and Tripura to take initiative on FORTIFICATION in North East India.
2. Mother Dairy Fruits & Vegetable Pvt Ltd to assist small manufacturers in North East about Milk Fortification.
3. Ministry of Women and Child Development to extend all the support on fortification.
4. Department of Biotechnology in North East (one district per state) to set up a demonstration unit on fortification for small manufacturers for a duration of 1.5 years.
5. FSSAI to roll out fortification initiative in one of the Assam districts via Mid-Day Meal Scheme. This will be done in support with various development partners.
6. World Food Programme agreed on providing technical assistance on rice fortification to State Government in North East, India.
7. To promote fortification of wheat flour, the major players of the flour-mills in the North East, particularly Assam, which alone has 110 mills, would take the lead in fortification and implement it within the next 6 weeks. They would use the logo for fortified atta.
8. For small chakkis that constitute the bulk production of wheat flour, kits will be provided with all the information required to implement fortification. An incentive scheme would be created to encourage and support them.
9. For consumer awareness, GAIN would make creative for public education to promote fortified food and the North Eastern Council would provide support for publicity and take it to farmers.
10. Since rice is the staple food in the North Eastern region, fortified rice would be promoted heavily to ensure improvement of the nutrition profile of the population.
11. Edible oil and milk have universal penetration in the market and are the easiest to fortify, therefore, big brands that hold 50% of the market share for edible oil and milk would voluntarily adopt fortification of these two food commodities.
12. Since the North Eastern region has been a leader in salt iodization, reaching 90% coverage in the 1990s, the Civil Supplies Department would take the lead on DFS as well.
13. Tata Trusts has the capacity to support DFS owing to the successful DFS programme in Tripura.
14. Since Ministry of Health is already spending money on creating awareness for iodized salt the messaging needs to be changed to promote DFS without additional cost for publicity. The industry needs to be primed about the financial benefits for DFS and the State and consumers need to be made aware of the health and economic benefits.
15. Consumer organisations would take the lead on addressing myths regarding fortification and support the Government in public awareness campaigns.
16. DBT would support intervention studies to show the effect of DFS on anaemia, once State Governments identify places to be commissioned.
17. The Tea Sector would begin to provide fortified food as ration to workers on tea plantations as this would require minimal additional effort on their part. Micronutrient deficiencies are especially endemic in tea garden communities thus this is a vulnerable target population.
18. The North Eastern State Governments would introduce fortified foods in their Government programs- MDM, ICDS and PDS. First, the government representatives present at the consultation would brief the Chief State Secretaries about food fortification through the advocacy kits and fortified rice kernel samples presented at the Consultation. Next, the States would be brought on a common platform create a Task Force with fortification as a top agenda.
19. The NEC would partner with FSSAI and WCD to begin food fortification in the North Eastern Region.