



Consultation on Improving Nutrition of Tea Garden Workers Through Fortification

8th June 2017, 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm
ITC Sonar Bangla, Kolkata, West Bengal

A Consultation to discuss the introduction of fortified foods such as wheat flour and rice as part of the rations provided to tea garden workers to improve their nutrition status was organized in **Kolkata, West Bengal**, by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in partnership with Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) on **8th June 2017 from 2-6pm**.



Participants

CEO, FSSAI chaired the consultation. Senior officials from the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, West Bengal and Assam, the Tea Board of India, the Indian Tea Association, Tea Research Association as well as representatives from the industry, including tea companies and wheat flour companies participated in this consultation. The detailed list is attached at **Annexure 1**.

Presentations

The event started with the Welcome Address by CEO, FSSAI in which he emphasized the need for fortification as a simple, cost-effective and sustainable strategy to combat micronutrient malnutrition in India.

This was followed by a comprehensive presentation by Ms. Smita Mankad, Head, Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC), FSSAI, on the need for fortification, scientific evidence, national and international experience on fortification, adoption of fortified foods in tea gardens, incremental

costs and an overview of the supply chain. Communication kits were provided to all participants that included standards for fortification, technical handbooks and FAQs to improve their understanding.

Mr. Tarun Vij, Country Head, GAIN, provided an overview on the Seeds of Prosperity project led by GAIN in the tea gardens for the overall improvement of nutrition of tea garden workers through complementary methods such as diet diversification and nutrition education.

Finally, Mr. Arijit Raha, Indian Tea Association spoke about the severe malnutrition in tea gardens and the various points of intervention to improve the nutrition status of tea garden workers. He pointed out that there are health food shops present in tea garden communities, which can help promote fortified foods and be used as centres of distribution of public health education material. Community kitchen gardens of tea gardens could be better utilized to produce nutritious fruits and vegetables to provide better nutrition to tea garden workers. He advocated the promotion of fortified milk, oil and salt in fair price shops in addition to fortified wheat flour and rice as more avenues to deliver nutrients to tea garden workers. Finally, he proposed the idea of fortification of tea itself, which would be a game changer for the industry.

Discussion

Following the presentation a discussion was held on promoting fortification. This gist of the discussion is as follows:

1. Shri Rajesh Prasad, Commissioner and Secretary, Department of Food and Civil Supplies and Welfare of Minorities, Assam emphasized the severity of malnutrition in Assam and the importance of local initiatives to diversify diets, educate people about fortification and promote fortified foods in health food shops. He also advocated for rice fortification for the entire state as this is the dominant staple food for Assam.
2. Shri Azim Monem, Chair, ITA, emphasized the importance of promoting food hygiene and improving living conditions through the Ethical Tea Partnership programme in collaboration with the ITA and Government Departments.
3. Shri Mr. Prabhat Bezboruah, Chairman, Tea Research Association, pointed out the widespread prevalence of calcium and Vitamin D deficiency along with anaemia in the tea gardens and special nutritional needs of the women tea garden workers, who constitute 60% of the workforce. He remarked that rice fortification is a priority since it is preferred cereal in West Bengal and Assam. However, due to the various technical challenges, additional help would be required to promote rice fortification.
4. Shri Santosh Sarangi, Deputy Chairman, Tea Board of India, remarked that the leadership of FSSAI is crucial and voluntary fortification would be more fruitful than mandatory fortification. He pointed out that it is critical to hit the right point in the supply chain, especially since different states follow different models. Once NFSA becomes universal the responsibility of providing food and rations to workers will shift away from tea estate manager to the Government and that the Government should do its best to ensure fortification

Next Steps

The action points that emerged from the discussion are as follows:

1. The supply side for rice needs to be mapped out and demand and supply need to be aligned in West Bengal and Assam. This involves connecting the producers of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRKs) with rice producers and providing them with the necessary technical assistance to start supply fortified rice in PDS and tea garden rations.
2. The fortification initiative is to be combined with the Safe and Nutritious Food initiative of FSSAI, Seeds of Prosperity and other interventions by ETP for a holistic strategy to improve the nutrition status and health profile of tea garden workers. This includes providing them material on nutrition, diet diversification, improving food hygiene practices and overall good health practices.
3. UNILEVER is to distribute the Pink Book, developed by FSSAI in tea gardens in the local language to promote safe and nutritious food.
4. A series of workshops are to be organised with ITA and Self-Help Groups for tea garden managers and tea garden workers to educate them on good nutrition and hygiene practices, in addition to educating them about the benefits of fortified foods.

Pre-Launch of Fortified Wheat by ITC and Patanjali

Patanjali and ITC pre-launched their fortified atta. ITC will make their fortified Aashirvaad atta available within two weeks in Delhi and soon after all over India. It is fortified with iron, vitamin B 12 and folic acid.

After the launch, a media briefing was held, followed by a special meeting with the Tea Board of India. The minutes of this meeting are attached at **Annexure 2**.

Annexure 2

A meeting was convened on 8th June 2017, in Kolkata, to discuss various issues of tea gardens with FSSAI by the Tea Board of India.

The following action points emerged from the meeting:

1. It is proposed to FSSAI to revise Crude Fibre of tea (FSSAI limit is 16.5% max) based on scientific data generated by Tea Research Institutes in order to improve the quality of tea.
2. It is proposed to revise the current stringent MRLs and fix realistic MRLs as fixed by CODEX. Tea Board as already submitted a representation to FSSAI based on field trial pesticide residue data generated by tea research institutes.
3. The current limit for heavy metal Lead is 10 ppm. It is proposed to revise this standard and decrease it to 5ppm since there is no tea found having beyond 5ppm of lead.
4. Methodology for detecting iron filing is an issue which needs to be resolved by providing the modified methodology finalized by tea research institutes. The amended BIS standard (IS-3633) containing the modified procedure is under printing.
5. It is proposed to allow the use of nature identical flavour in tea to enhance tea trade considerably. Nature Identical flavour is allowed in other food products. More flavours such as lime, chocolate, mint, orange and mango may be added under the existing clause. These are already permitted for other food items.
6. It is proposed to harmonize standards among regulatory bodies, namely, FSSAI, CODEX, EU and others. FSSAI is requested to develop a strategy to harmonize these standards e.g. Anthraquinone and Propargite. More liberal standards are requested for the use of wider range of chemicals.