

**National Webinar – India Milk Fortification Summit**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Nov, Thursday| 1500 – 1700 hrs**  
**A complete Report**

India, being a country in developmental transition, faces the dual burden of under-nutrition and infectious diseases as well as lifestyle-related degenerative diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and cancers. In addition to these, India is also affected by micronutrient deficiencies which have a detrimental effect on growth and development.

Staple food fortification is recognized by the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan), as one of the most cost-effective and complementary strategy to reduce micronutrient malnutrition, across all population groups.

The role of vitamin A and D in boosting the immunity has already been well established. Vitamin D is essential for bone health and adequate intake is required to prevent growth faltering in children. Recent data suggest a high prevalence of these two vitamins in the population which is a growing public health concern. As per CNNS 2018, the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency affects 18% pre-school children, 22% school-age children and 16% adolescents. Vitamin D deficiency affects 14% of pre-school children, 18% of school-age children and 24% of adolescents in India.

GAIN-India and TATA TRUSTS in partnership with FFRC-FSSAI, has been working to support and promote fortification of milk, in order to reduce the huge burden of micronutrient malnutrition.

The Food Fortification Resource Center (FFRC, FSSAI) jointly with GAIN and TATA Trusts has planned a series of National seminar on fortification of five staples such as wheat, rice, milk, oil and salt. The intent is to bring together industry, academia & policy makers on a common platform to discuss the role and scope of fortification in reducing micronutrient malnutrition in India. The third of the five national seminar, **INDIA MILK FORTIFICATION SUMMIT-Fortifying Milk for Nutrition and Immunity**, was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The webinar discussed key aspects of fortification of milk and milk products. Recent scientific research on role of fortified milk for improving nutrition and immunity was also shared. The roadmap for scaling up of milk fortification was launched during the webinar.

**Mr. Vivek Arora, Senior Advisor, TATA Trusts**, kickstarted the event with a very warm welcome address which set the context and laid the foundation of the national webinar.

**Mr. Arun Singhal IAS, CEO, FSSAI**, highlighted in his Key Note Address that, industry preparedness for fortifying milk is there. And the scientific panel which deals with fortification is quite convinced that there are benefits of fortifying milk. The matter has gone to the authority and which has advocated to the government that fortification of milk with vitamin A and D shall be made mandatory. A draft regulation in that regard has been presented in front of the honourable minister, it has been approved in principle by the authorities and it would soon be out.

**Ms. Inoshi Sharma, IRS, Director FSSAI**, highlighted FSSAI's role in Staple Food Fortification. She shared that FSSAI plays a key role in setting up standards and regulations of the +F logo via a dedicated hub called the Food Fortification resource center (FFRC) facilitating alignment in both open markets and Govt. safety net programs. Apart from this FSSAI take the responsibility of building consumer awareness through joint marketing campaigns, building capacities with workshops & pieces of training in compliance with industry standards.

**Dr. Ambrish Mithal, Head of Endocrinology and Diabetes at Max Healthcare** in his extremely informative thematic address discussed that the potential role of fortified milk with vitamin A and D in boosting our immunity is well known and this has become more critical in present times of COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that the window of safety for vitamin D is very wide and vitamin D toxicity cannot

happen unless there is a gross human error. He also said that the current status of fortified milk is very impressive with 55 brands of milk already fortifying milk and this needs to go up and scale up to 100% and simultaneously there is a need to ensure proper monitoring mechanism and studies to look at the impact of fortification. He suggested that we need to factor these while planning budgets for our programmes. In his way forward he stressed that we need fortification, and quite clearly the time has come for our country to fortify milk so that vitamin A and D reaches the remotest person in our country.

**Mr. Tarun Vij, Country Director GAIN, and Secretariat POSHTIK Network**, launched the **strategic roadmap for scaling up milk fortification in India**. He shared that the objective is to engage in effective collaboration to fortify at least 70% of the fortifiable, processed and packaged milk by 2022. Further he shared that the next goal is to work with other partners and all stakeholders and advocated for mandatory fortification of milk by 2023 and finally working towards capacitating industry so that all the fortifiable milk available in India, is adequately and appropriately fortified as per the national gazetted standards, by 2025. He shared about the activities planned in that regard, which includes the following:

1. Doing a landscape analysis of what the progress has been across the states of the public system through the public dairies and milk cooperatives and identify areas which require attention
2. Focus capacity building of dairies, Food Safety Officers, premix suppliers and NABL accredited laboratories on all the aspects related to milk fortification
3. Working with the ministries at the national level and the state level and sensitize all stakeholders about the benefits of fortifying milk. Using all available channels to generate demand among consumers, media, civil society and open market channels.
4. Ensuring sustainability in fortification efforts by industry, governments, and development sector partners

**Ms. Deepti Gulati, Head of Programmes, GAIN** moderated the technical session. She was elated as she introduced the rich panel namely Mr. Meenesh Shah, Executive Director, National Dairy Development Board, Dr. G.S. Rajorhia, President, IDA, Mr. J D Singh, GM, Quality Control and Marketing Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation, Mr. Suresh Patidar, Senior GM and Head, Quality Assurance, Heritage Foods Limited and Mr. Kailash Gahir, Chief Growth Enabler Milk Mantra.

**Mr. Meenesh Shah, Executive Director, National Dairy Development Board**, shared about the milk fortification progress by the cooperatives. The milk cooperatives have made a significant progress to provide fortified milk across the country covering more than 90% of the geographical areas India. Around 30 cooperative milk brands in the market are fortified.

He shared that NDDDB has developed standard operating procedures for fortification and testing of milk and that they have trained all NABL accredited laboratories on this and knowledge dissemination workshops have also been held. He highlighted that a lot of consumer awareness activities were done by the cooperatives to ensure that people are aware that the milk that they consume is fortified. This was followed by the monitoring and evaluation of these activities.

In his way forward he shared that the cooperatives will be working towards 100% fortification of milk. He urged, that to ensure the well-being of our population it is important that all the stakeholders work together towards mandatory fortification of milk.

**Dr. G.S. Rajorhia, President, IDA**, enlightened the participants with his rich experience. He shared that the contribution of milk cooperatives to the fortifiable milk quantity is approximately 220 Lakh Litres per Day (LLPD), while the private sector contributes approximately 196 LLPD. The total quantity can potentially benefit almost 275 million people. Out of this 416 LLPD produced, about 176 LLPD gets fortified currently, reaching about 117 million people. He pointed out while formulating any standard it is important to take into consideration the component of milk which is not pasteurized and yet being distributed among the consumers. Also the amount of nutrients mixed should be such that that it takes

into account the losses during pasteurization. He laid stress on the fact that in the future our survival will be dependent on our immunity, and boosting it through supplementation and fortification would be necessary. He also shared the opinion of the private players in the milk industry which was that, whole milk which has 6% fat, nothing should be added to it or subtracted from it and fortification of whole milk can be voluntary.

The panel discussion which had representatives from the cooperatives and industry saw panellist sharing about why they were investing in fortification of milk and how the monitoring, quality control and quality assurance activities were being carried out in the cooperatives and private industry.

**Mr. Suresh Patidar, Senior GM and Head, Quality Assurance, Heritage Foods Limited**, shared that **Heritage** has actively participated in the food fortification activity, and is now catering in 11 states. They have undertaken large scale fortification at the commercial level with the support of KHPT and GAIN. He also shared that they have trained private industry in food fortification in the Telangana region. He stated that Heritage is spending 25-30 lakh per annum without any additional cost to the consumer for their benefit.

All the 17 manufacturing units of **Heritage** are certified by the Food safety management system and some others are certified by BIS, AGMARK, OASIS, QMS, AMS, Environmental management system, energy management system. He said *"Our team is absolutely committed to deliver quality product to the consumers. All the legal statutory and standards are being maintained and following without any relaxation."*

**Mr. Kailash Gahir, Chief Growth Enabler Milk Mantra**, explained that purpose of starting the company was to bridge the trust between the consumer and the producer. Milk Mantra became the first company to fortify milk and it started a different category of milk which was named as **super vitamin milk** fortified with vitamin A and D.

He further elaborated that massive outdoor campaign all across the 10 big towns in Odisha were carried out which involved propagating the goodness of this fortified milk. The company tied up with schools and a TV campaign in Odia was executed to generate awareness about this category of milk. He also shared that rigorous store branding was also done to promote this category of milk. He further stated that *"this category has become a very good capacity which contributes to 22% of market share of our entire category of products."*

Talking about the QA/QC he shared that, starting from the farmer to the consumer level, 20 odd tests are done in the quality control systems, and that their units comply to all the quality certifications of FSSAI. He very happily shared that **Milk Mantra** has also been recently given a grant of 10 million dollars to invest in the quality control infrastructure. **Mr. Kailash Gahir**, was of the view that all the milk products should be fortified to contribute to human health.

Adding to the discussion **Mr. J D Singh, GM, Quality Control and Marketing Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation**, shared the challenges in scaling up milk fortification in RCDF. He also spoke about the role that the development partners such as GAIN has played in providing financial and technical support to RDCF, propelling milk fortification in Rajasthan. As a result, *Saras* fortified milk is reaching to 8 million people in Rajasthan. Most of the dairies did not have technical input and testing facilities initially, but with the support of GAIN they were able to build capacity and infrastructure and provide fortified milk to the population.

With regard to QA/QC he shared that they have defined the standards of milk for ensuring safety and they are fortifying milk with vitamin A and D as per the FSSAI guidelines. He also shared that in order to make sure that appropriate fortification is taking place proper protocols have been developed and implemented and records are maintained at all levels.

**Ms. Deepti Gultati** appreciated the efforts of RDCF for scaling up the supply of fortified milk from 4000 litres to over 50 million litres and shared that perhaps because of the tireless efforts of the RCDF in promoting milk fortification, vitamin A deficiency levels among children in Rajasthan have come down.

The open house saw a flood of questions and answers but due to paucity of time only some key specific questions were being answered. Majorly spoken question and answers were around the shelf life of the premixes, labelling of fortified food products.

Ms. Deepti Gulati and all the panelists beautifully explained and answered most of the questions.

**Ms. Inoshi Sharma**, expressed her gratitude to all esteemed panelists, speakers & participants who came in large numbers to attend this informative and enriching webinar and make it a huge success. She gave the concluding remarks that milk is consumed by all population groups and fortifying it with A and D would be a very good strategy to address micronutrient malnutrition. It is extremely cost effective. She stressed that during the present Covid 19 situation the importance enhancing and maintaining the micronutrient stores of population cannot be overemphasized and people are ready to accept fortified foods.

She reiterated that a robust QA and QC is already in place to assess the industry in fulfilling the quality standards. And she finally urged industry, cooperatives, stakeholders, scientific committee to take the mandatory provision to its fullest potential.

The event was attended by more than 500 participants, which included students, public health researchers, stakeholders across the milk value chain such as milk producers, processors, marketers, dairy technologists, scientists, researchers, policy makers, regulatory bodies like FSSAI.