

Fortification – A mechanism to address Micronutrient Malnutrition

At the 2nd Stakeholder Consultation on Food Fortification, held in Mumbai on 6th May 2015, the **National Alliance for Edible Oil Fortification (NAOF)** reiterated its commitment to work towards creating an enabling environment for voluntary fortification, with the broader objective of meeting the nutrition requirements of the Indian population.

Towards achieving this objective, the NAOF will work on a three pronged approach – first with consumer organizations to assess and create awareness of fortified foods (including edible oil); second with state governments to leverage fortification as a complementary strategy to deliver needed micro-nutrients to the population and share best practices among states; third & last- create an enabling environment for industry to launch fortified foods to address consumer needs.

According to Mr Siraj Chaudhry , Chairman National Alliance for Edible oil Fortification & Chairman - Cargill India Pvt. Ltd, although a self-sufficient food producer, India is home to one quarter of the world's hungry, and an estimated 40% of the country's children are malnourished. The prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world, accounting for nearly one-third of the world's growth-stunted youth. Micronutrient fortification of food items commonly consumed can be a powerful strategy to combat micronutrient deficiencies in a sustainable manner.

When Cargill India pioneered the efforts of fortifying its edible oils way back in 2008 , in addition to creating a new competitive advantage for Cargill in the Indian market, fortification helped provide essential vitamins (A, D and E) to over 30 million people across the nation and supported nation's battle with malnourishment. Over time, the innovation has motivated competing brands to fortify their oil offerings, too—a market-wide change that Cargill welcomes. Knowing it will help more Indians recover from chronic vitamin deficiency, it was a competitive advantage we were quite happy to lose.” said Siraj Chaudhry, Chairman National Alliance for Edible oil Fortification & Chairman - Cargill India Pvt. Ltd. He further congratulated CII & GAIN for providing a platform where all stakeholders could come together and build the roadmap for nutritional security.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Deepak Kapoor, Secretary, Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Department, Government of Maharashtra said that .

Mr Ashim Sanyal, COO, Voluntary Organization in the Interest of Consumer, shared that .

Mr. Salil Kumar, Manager- India operations, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition .

Earlier Ms Meetu Kapur, Executive Director, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) shared that CII is working on a comprehensive agenda towards positioning India as the 'Food Factory' to the world through catalyzing investments, encouraging adequate farm gate infrastructure and making food processing an integral part of the inclusive growth strategy. Taking forward the CII GAIN project, the NAOF will explore collaborating with potential partners, for spreading awareness of fortification through consumer awareness campaigns

In the Indian context for regulation of food fortification, the government has come out with guidelines on food fortification for Government run programmes like the Public Distribution System (PDS) under Ministry of Consumer affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the Integrated Child and Development Services (ICDS) under Ministry of Women & Child Development, and many other such schemes. These are some of the avenues that offer ready opportunity for micronutrient interventions.

Access to affordable, safe, and efficacious fortified foods is hence a good way to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition that will transform the food and nutritional security landscape in the country.

The NAOF meeting was attended by representatives from the Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Department in the Government of Maharashtra, National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Tata Trust, Solvent Extractors' Association of India, Solvent Extractors' Association of India, Edible Oil manufacturers, Voluntary Organization in the Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE) representing the stakeholders from the industry, regulators, NGOs and the consumers.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) with support from Global Alliance for Improving Nutrition (GAIN) has launched an initiative on **National Edible Oil Fortification**. This project aims at building consensus and momentum to promote fortification as an Industry-led initiative and making industry a stakeholder in India's fight against malnutrition.