

## CEO, FSSAI on being chosen as the "Fortification Leader" on the occasion of FFI's 15-year anniversary

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#### **FFI: How is your country prioritizing fortification?**

*Agarwal:* Food fortification has been put on the national agenda through the release of Standards for Food Fortification and the launch of a logo to identify fortified food (+F). A dedicated Food Fortification Resource Centre has been set up as a resource hub to engage with and align all stakeholders on fortification, motivate, nudge and facilitate the food industry to adopt food fortification as a norm, align demand and supply of fortified foods in the open market, and build consumer awareness around the need and benefits of fortification in addressing vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

#### **FFI: What other projects are you currently working on?**

*Agarwal:* At FSSAI, we have the responsibility of ensuring safe and wholesome food for all citizens of India. Our motto is “Inspiring Trust, Assuring Safe and Nutritious Food.” In line with this, we have a large number of initiatives and programs around safe and nutritious food at homes, schools, workplaces, and restaurants. We have a dedicated consumer portal as well as streamlined processes for licensing and registration by food businesses. It is our goal to be seen as a trusted partner to all food businesses in the country and not merely as the regulatory and enforcement agency.



**FFI: What are the main components to a successful fortification program where you live?**

*Agarwal:* Collaboration, convergence and communication are the key components for a successful fortification program at a national level. An enabling environment from the Government, technical assistance, capacity building and program implementation by development partners on the ground, enthusiastic adoption of voluntary food fortification by businesses, support from the medical, scientific and academic communities and large-scale consumer awareness campaigns are some essential elements.

**FFI: What are the greatest challenges you have encountered in planning or implementing fortification programs? And how did you address those challenges?**

*Agarwal:* A key challenge is the large unorganized sector in each of the five staple commodities we selected for large-scale fortification. Also adoption of fortification at the state level requires both central Government support and ground level handholding. Building consumer awareness and behaviour change communication needs to be done on a sustained basis to create demand and have an impact.

**FFI: What can we do, as a society, to continue raising the fortification efforts?**

*Agarwal:* Learn about fortification and its need, the benefit of various vitamins and minerals, check your own vitamin and mineral deficiency levels and those of your family, adopt and include fortified food in your daily diet and continue to share verified information about nutrition and the right eating habits with your friends and family.

**FFI: Is there anything else you would like to share?**

*Agarwal:* India would be one of the first large countries, where food fortification is not mandated but the food regulator plays a central role without mandatory fortification. We can see businesses adopting fortification and soon fortified staples will be a definitive option.