

For immediate release

Press Release

Ensuring availability of milk with added vitamins (A and D) for every Indian

New Delhi, Thur, 26 Nov 2020: India has a very high burden of malnutrition, including micronutrient malnutrition. As per the latest CNNS, 2019 report the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency affects 18% pre-school children, 22% school-age children and 16% adolescents and Vitamin D deficiency is a growing public health concern and affects 14% of pre-school children, 18% of school-age children and 24% of adolescents in India. Deficiency of vitamin A and D have adverse impact on morbidity, mortality, productivity and economic growth. Vitamin A and D also strengthen the immune system, which is critical in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently, FSSAI, GAIN & Tata Trusts, together organised the India Milk Fortification Summit. It discussed the key operational areas as well as challenges in this direction. It was jointly hosted by Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Food Safety Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) and Tata Trust. Several representatives from the Government, Development partners, Academia and milk industry participated in the webinar.

Shri Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI said that *“Lot more such events are required to prepare all stakeholders to motivate them and nudge them in the direction of greater degree of fortification of milk. Vitamin A and D deficiency is a serious problem in our country and fortification is a widely accepted strategy for addressing malnutrition. There are 14 countries in the world where Milk fortification is mandatory.”*

He further elaborated that *“We are convinced that fortification is an effective intervention for reducing the deficiency of vitamin A and D. The cost of fortifying milk is fortunately very low which is something like 2 paise per litre, quite easily affordable. We understand that industry preparedness is there. State governments are now demanding that fortification should be made mandatory and in this background the roadmap which has been developed and circulated it calls for 70% fortification of fortifiable milk by 2022 and 100 percent by 2023. Looking at the state of preparedness and potential benefits, FSSAI has deliberated upon this matter, there is a scientific panel which deals with this, the panel was quite convinced that there are benefits of fortifying milk and the matter has gone to the authority and the authority has now recommended to the government that fortification of milk with vitamin A and D be made mandatory. And this draft has been presented in front of the honourable minister, it has been approved in principle by the authorities. Within a month or so the draft regulation would be out.”*

GAIN and Tata Trusts, along with Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC)-FSSAI, have been working together with milk and dairy industry, to build their capacity to produce the quality assured milk fortified with vitamin A and D. At present, 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. This is 43% of the total fortifiable milk. Now is the time to scale up the milk fortification, across country, to improve the nutrition and health status of Indian population.

Dr. Ambrish Mithal, Head of Endocrinology and Diabetes at Max Healthcare emphasized that *“the window of safety for vitamin D is very wide and vitamin D toxicity cannot happen unless there is a gross human error or mistake. There is no natural vitamin D in milk effectively. For vitamin D there are no source except sunlight which is no available to us.”* 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.”*

Tarun Vij, Country Director, presented and launched the Roadmap for Scaling-up Milk Fortification in India, that was jointly developed by GAIN, Tata Trusts and FSSAI-FFRC. He shared that the objective of developing the strategic roadmap 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. He said that *“we will be 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.”*

The Summit discussed the need, importance and the status of milk fortification in India. The deliberations focussed on the challenges, as well as the opportunities available and the role of development sector partners, in scaling-up fortification with quality assurance and quality control.

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