

CII organises National Nutrition Conclave to address malnutrition issues

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In order to address the critical issues of malnutrition, a multi-pronged strategy involving intersection of the agriculture, health and nutrition needs to be developed. And it was with the objective of forging partnerships and provide a platform for all relevant stakeholders that the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence organised the National Nutrition Conclave recently.

The Conclave provided a platform for the government, development agencies, industries and related stakeholders to come together to deliberate on critical challenges and emerging opportunities in the sector.

Policymakers and practitioners in the agriculture, nutrition and health sectors, while working in their respective target areas, need to collaborate to accelerate the effort for delivery of adequate and good nutrition, good health and promote enable sustainable agricultural growth.

Rita Teatota, chairperson, FSSAI, at the inaugural session of the Conclave, emphasised on the need to revisit the mandate of the National Nutrition Mission with the aim to look beyond the Integrated Child Nutrition programme and put equal emphasis on other aspects that go along with nutrition.

She mentioned that FSSAI is working in tandem with major National Programmes of the Government of India to ensure fortification becomes integral to those programmes. Teatota also informed participants that FSSAI had rolled out the fortification standards for five staples - wheat, rice, oil, milk, double fortified salt, which are voluntary in nature at present.

Success has been achieved towards the effort in terms of oil and milk, where fortification of packaged edible oil is at present 51 per cent, while that of milk is 26-27 per cent.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, in his special address at the conclave, said, "The food we consume should be good for the planet too. Sustainability is a very important part of nutrition."

"When we refer to nutrition, we refer to healthy diet, but we should have a more holistic, sustainable approach than just talking about positive nutrition," he added, stating that with Eat Right, FSSAI is changing the conversation around nutrition and how India eats.

The Eat Right India merchandise store was also launched by the chief of the country's apex food regulator at the Conclave. The merchandise has been created to inspire the country towards healthy living.

Vinita Bali, chairperson, CII National Committee on Nutrition, while setting the context of the conclave mentioned that CII created the National Committee on Nutrition in 2017 for the private sector, developmental partners and the government to come together to fight malnutrition and tackle the nutrition problem.

She mentioned that the industry and other partners are ready for partnership that was not witnessed earlier. With collaboration and collective effort, she mentioned that the Sustainable Development Goals are achievable and attainable.

Rakesh Sarwal, additional secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), said, "The nutritional challenge is amongst the biggest developmental challenges faced by the country."

"The focus of the ministry towards nutrition was through its effort of providing incentives and support measures for processing of perishables – milk, meat, food and vegetables," he added.

"MoFPI has launched the Gram Samridhi Yojna to handhold and increase the competitiveness of the unorganised sector, which comprises 99 per cent of the industry segment," Sarwal said.

The Conclave also saw the launch of CII's online compendium on nutrition initiatives, which is titled Accelerating Nutrition Delivery (AND), and focusses on capturing both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive programmes that various organisations have been involved with, either on their own, or in partnership with others, including government initiatives.

The compendium would be a knowledge-sharing platform which would be updated continuously to provide further opportunities to stakeholders to collaborate on an organic and dynamic basis.

The summit had attracted a wider participation of more than 35 eminent national and international speakers from industry, government and experts in the Nutrition space.

The conclave was attended by over 200 participants comprising of food and beverage entrepreneurs, food and nutrition start-ups, clinical and public health nutritionists, food technologists, members of associations like the Indian Dietetic Association, Nutrition Society of India, NGOs, developmental partners such as UNICEF, GAIN, WFP and TATA Trust, amongst others, regulatory authorities, government officials and professionals from academia and industry, along with students.