

Milk fortification best tool to address malnutrition: NDDB Chairman

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Dilip Rath, Chairman, NDDB

So far about 1 million tonnes of milk is fortified across 20 states

The Milk Fortification Project - a collaborative initiative of the World Bank, Tata Trusts and National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) to address vitamin deficiencies in the consumers has seen significant progress over the past two years.

A latest information shared by the NDDB revealed that about 25 milk federations/producer companies or milk unions across 20 states in India are fortifying about 55 lakh litres of milk per day. The fortification is being carried out as per the Standard Operating Procedures developed by NDDB and the FSSAI Standards. Till date, about one million metric tonnes of milk is fortified.

The project aims to process about 2 million metric tonnes of fortified liquid milk reaching to around 30 million consumers. The project duration is 23 months. NDDB is providing consultancy to World Bank for the implementation of this project.

Technical support

The Board is also providing technical and financial support to the Milk federations/Producer Companies/Unions for project implementation including development of SOPs for milk fortification & testing; quality assurance & quality control for milk fortification; conducting fortification trials/training/capacity building and for developing promotion materials. Of the 25 project proposals approved, fortification is launched in 15 Milk Federations/Producer Companies/Unions. In 10 Milk Federations/ Producer Companies/ Unions, trials/ training has been completed and the launch is in pipeline.

While inaugurating a workshop on "Sustaining Efforts of Milk Fortification in India" at NDDB, Anand on Friday, Dilip Rath, Chairman, NDDB informed that Vitamin A & D deficiencies are widely prevalent in India and that fortification of appropriate foods with Vitamin A and D is a viable strategy to tackle micronutrient malnutrition. "More specifically to India, micronutrient malnutrition is a silent emergency. As per WHO & UNICEF 2009 reports, the

nation bears the burden of more than a quarter of the world's vitamin A deficient preschool children and more than 13 million susceptible infants to iodine deficiency," said Rath.

Micronutrient deficiencies

According to National Family Health Survey- 4 data, among children under 5 years in India, 38.4 per cent are stunted, 21 per cent are wasted and 35.7 per cent are underweight. Micronutrient deficiencies such as iron, folic acid, vitamin B12, zinc and vitamin D are very prevalent and have overwhelming impact over the public health and economic productivity of the nation. The most powerful solution to combat this challenge is food fortification. With its high volume of production, widespread distribution network, affordability and all around acceptability in the daily food habit has emerged as the best vehicle for fortification.

"We are world's largest milk producing country and our per capita milk availability has now increased to 375 grams per day. Milk fortification is highly affordable and cost effective, as it cost less than 2 to 3 paise per litre," he said.

Dr Edward W Bresnayan, Senior Agricultural Economist, World Bank mentioned that the South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI) seeks to address the South Asian Enigma - how chronic malnutrition remains intractable despite high economic growth - by fostering the cross cutting actions that will lead to measurable improvements in food and nutrition security.