

## Micro-nutrients fortified in milk 'purely vegetarian': FSSAI

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New Delhi, Sep 5 () Food safety regulator FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal Wednesday said micro-nutrients such as vitamin A and D fortified in milk are "purely vegetarian" and urged the public not to worry.

The government is promoting milk fortification in a big way to address vitamin A and D deficiency prevalent in large population in the country. The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) has taken a lead in milk fortification in partnership with Tata Trust and the World Bank.

Currently, 72 lakh litre per day (LLPD) of milk is being fortified by cooperative dairies and 15 LLPD by private companies in the country, as per the official data.

"More dairy firms need to come forward. But some are spreading rumours that micro-nutrients mixed in milk are non-vegetarian. Although milk is considered as non-vegetarian by some section in the West, it is treated as vegetarian in India. We have kept sensitivities of people at large and micro-nutrients added to milk are purely vegetarian," Agarwal said addressing the national consultation on the issue.

Vitamins, either natural or in synthetic form, added in milk are easily absorbed and there are no negative effects. Even the cost of fortification is minimal, he said, added that the milk fortification is being done in western nations also.

With 66 crore people still suffering from micro-nutrient deficiency in India, the FSSAI chief called upon all dairy firms to start fortification of milk and also pitched for mandatory milk fortification.

"At present, a small quantity of milk is being fortified by 24 cooperative and private dairies. I strongly urge other dairies who are not doing to get into action and begin the fortification of milk," he said.

There is no need to worry about liquid milk that is consumed directly by the poor in villages. Since that milk does not get into processing, some nutritional value will be there. However, in the long run, that aspect needs to be addressed, he added.

Agarwal said milk fortification should continue even if Tata Trust stops funding the NDDB programme in future.

Mother Dairy, Jharkhand Milk Federation, Maahi Milk Producers Company and Creamline Dairy were felicitated for milk fortification champions at the event.

Mother Dairy Managing Director Sanjeev Khanna said the cooperative does milk fortification of 30 lakh litres per day and pledged to continue.

Milk production in India, the world's largest producer, is around 164 million tonnes. Out of which, mere 22 per cent of the milk from the organised sector is available for fortification.

FSSAI has already set standards for fortification of milk and even a logo '+F' has also been launched for the same. Fortification is allowed in edible oils, wheat flour, rice and salt as well.

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