



Extension of Food Fortification Scheme

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Why in News

In order to fight chronic **anaemia** and **undernutrition**, the government is making plans to distribute **fortified rice** through the **Integrated Child Development Services** and **Mid Day Meal Schemes** across the country from the year 2021, with special focus on **Aspirational districts**.

This was decided in a review meeting of an **existing pilot scheme** which aims to distribute fortified rice in 15 districts.

Key Points

- **Existing Scheme:** The centrally-sponsored pilot scheme was approved in February 2019, for a three-year period from 2019-20 onwards. Under it, one district each in 15 predominantly rice-eating States was selected.
 - It was found that, out of 15 states only 5 — Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh — have started the distribution of fortified rice in their identified pilot districts.
 - In other words, the scheme has only been implemented in five districts so far, although more than half the project duration is over.
- **Renewed Push:** The Food Corporation of India has now been mandated to scale up the annual supply of **Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK)** from the **current 15,000 tonnes to at least 1.3 lakh tonnes**.
 - To cover PDS, anganwadis and mid-day meals in the 112 aspirational districts, annual supply capacity would need to be increased to about 1.3 lakh tonnes.
 - Further, existing rice mills will be equipped with Blending Machines for mixing FRK with normal rice.

- **Other Related Initiatives:**

- **Milk Fortification Project** was launched by the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) in collaboration with the World Bank and Tata Trusts**, as a pilot project in 2017. It is intended to address vitamin deficiency in consumers.
- Recently, the month of September was observed as **Poshan Maah i.e. Nutrition month**. It includes a month-long activities focussed on antenatal care, optimal breastfeeding, anaemia, growth monitoring, girls education, diet, right age of marriage, hygiene and sanitation and eating healthy (food fortification).

Fortified Rice Kernels

- Fortifying rice involves grinding broken rice into powder, mixing it with nutrients, and then shaping it into rice-like kernels using an extrusion process.
- These fortified kernels are then mixed with normal rice in a ratio ranging from 1:50 to 1:200.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

It was launched on 2nd October, 1975, the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme** offers a package of six services (Supplementary Nutrition, Pre-school non-formal education, Nutrition & health education, Immunization, Health check-up and Referral services) to children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Mid-day Meal Scheme

- It was launched in 1995 as a centrally sponsored scheme.
- It provides that every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school shall be provided with a hot cooked meal, free of charge every day except on school holidays.
- The **Mid Day Meal Scheme** comes under the HRD Ministry's Department of School Education and Literacy.

Aspirational Districts

- The programme was launched in January 2018 with the aim of expeditiously improving the socio-economic status of 117 districts through cooperative and competitive federalism.
- The **Aspirational Districts programme** aims to rapidly transform districts that have been showing relatively less progress in key social areas, and have emerged as pockets of under-development, thereby posing a challenge to balanced regional development.

Food Fortification

- **About:** According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, food fortification is defined as the practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and to provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- **Types:** Food fortification can be done for foods widely consumed by the general population (mass fortification), to fortify foods designed for specific population subgroups, such as complementary foods for young children or rations for displaced populations (targeted fortification) and/or to allow food manufacturers to voluntarily fortify foods available in the marketplace (market-driven fortification).
- **Procedure:** The extent to which a national or regional food supply is fortified varies considerably. The concentration of just one micronutrient might be increased in a single foodstuff (e.g. the iodization of salt), or, at the other end of the scale, there might be a whole range of food–micronutrient combinations.
- In October 2016, **Food Safety and Standards Authority Of India (FSSAI)** operationalized the **Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016** for fortifying staples namely Wheat Flour and Rice (with Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid), Milk and Edible Oil (with Vitamins A and D) and Double Fortified Salt (with Iodine and Iron) to reduce the high burden of micronutrient malnutrition in India.
- India's **National Nutritional strategy, 2017**, had listed food fortification as one of the interventions to address anaemia, vitamin A and iodine deficiencies apart from supplementation and dietary diversification.

Source: TH