Regulator sets up scientific panel on food fortification and nutrition

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On 2 February, the regulator, FSSAI, notified a draft plan to make supply of fortified food mandatory for government-supported schemes such as mid-day meal at schools, Integrated Child Development Services and Public Distribution System. Photo: Pradeep Gaur/Mint

New Delhi: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Tuesday said it has set up a scientific panel on “food fortification and nutrition” to help fight malnutrition in the country.

On 2 February, the regulator notified a draft plan to make supply of fortified food mandatory for government-supported schemes such as mid-day meal at schools, Integrated
Child Development Services (ICDS) and Public Distribution System (PDS). FSSAI will carry out the exercise in collaboration with the Union ministry of women and child development.

“The panel will identify critical nutritional gaps in the Indian diet in general as well as in specific target groups based on diet surveys and credible scientific evidence, define strategies to address nutritional needs of the general population and vulnerable groups, and review the standards for all suitable food fortifying vehicles, in addition to the healthy dietary intake of fat, sugar & salt,” FSSAI said in a statement.

The panel will also address regulatory and related technological issues, review proposals from industry using modern risk assessment methods, and prescribe standard sampling and test methods for effective monitoring, surveillance and enforcement of the relevant regulations, according to the FSSAI statement.

The 11-member scientific panel, along with other scientists currently working on fortification of wheat flour, refined flour, rice, milk, edible oil and salt, will work with the ministries of women & child development, health & family welfare, department of biotechnology and the Indian Council of Medical Research.

The food regulator had said it targets to make use of fortified wheat flour, fortified edible oil and double fortified iodised salt mandatory for mid-day meals by December 2019 while the same will be made mandatory in the PDS by January 2020.

Fortification is a process to add essential micronutrients like vitamins and iron to food grains or commodities.

Last month, FSSAI had set standards for fortified rice, wheat flour, milk, edible oil and salt.