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Full milk fortification in organised sector soon: Tata Trusts

New Delhi, Aug 20 (PTI): Tata Trusts, which has been partnering with the government in milk fortification programme, expects to cover the entire organised sector within the next 6-9 months, much ahead of schedule. The philanthropic bodies set up by Tata group founders had earlier set a target of fortifying 50 per cent of organised sector milk by 2019.

The trusts have joined hands with central food safety regulator FSSAI, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and other co-operatives in many states to add micro-nutrients, specially Vitamin A and D in milk to address deficiency problems as part of its food fortification programme.

"I have a feeling that at least in the organised sector, which is through the dairy-cooperatives, it is very likely to happen in the next six to nine months," Tata Trusts Senior Advisor, Nutrition Rajan Sankar told PTI.

He was responding to a query on the timeframe by when Tata Trusts expects to achieve 100 per cent fortification of milk in the organised sector.
At present, the level of milk fortification in organised sector is around 25 per cent. In 2015-16, Indias total milk production stood at 155.5 million tonnes with 18-20 per cent coming from the organised sector and the rest from small and marginal farmers.

Sankar attributed the acceleration in organised sector milk fortification to major diary co-operatives of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh coming on board.

"All the three will start in the next two months. It will pick up momentum...Once it crosses a critical mass of 30 -40 per cent of the market, there will be so much of pressure on others to follow it," he added.

Besides, Sankar said with the government now driving the programme through FSSAI with active participation of NDDB, milk fortification has achieved success in organised sector.

"We started it but now it is completely being pushed by the government. We are only a playing role to assist," he added.

Tata Trusts initiative of milk fortification is currently being carried out in Maharashtra, Assam, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Jharkhand.

Sankar said the challenge going ahead would be how to address deficiency of vitamin A and D in rural areas as the organised sector milk currently caters only to urban and semi-urban areas.

"To address micro-nutrients deficiency problems in rural areas, we would need a different strategy, either through tablets or capsules for high risk population," he said.
Tata Trusts has started working in few states in partnership with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) promoting use of fortified edible oil and flour in mid-day meal for children, Sankar added.