

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION  
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

**LOK SABHA**  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.236  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2024

**DISTRIBUTION OF FORTIFIED RICE THROUGH PDS**

236 SHRI VISHALDADA PRAKASHBAPU PATIL:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION  
उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) the quantity and rate of fortified rice purchased and mixed with general rice distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the country during each of the last five years along with the name of the supplier companies, State/UT-wise;
- (b) the rationale behind making fortified rice mandatory in public distribution schemes despite concerns raised by health experts and activists;
- (c) the measures taken to protect individuals with sickle cell disease, thalassemia and other vulnerable groups from potential harmful effects of iron-fortified rice;
- (d) whether any comprehensive health impact assessment was conducted before scaling up the fortified rice scheme nationwide and if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate the scheme's effectiveness in reducing anaemia; and
- (f) the alternatives considered for addressing malnutrition and anaemia, especially promoting diverse, locally available nutritious foods in the country?

**A N S W E R**  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS,  
FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION  
(SHRIMATI NIMUBEN JAYANTIBHAI BAMBHANIYA)

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(a): Rice Fortification is the process of adding Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK) to normal rice/Custom Milled Rice (CMR) 1% by weight. The Government of India has approved the incremental cost of rice fortification with a cap of Rs.0.73 per kg (or actual whichever is less). The States and Union territories, as per prescribed specifications, also purchase FRK for the rice fortification initiative. Nearly 406 LMT of fortified rice has been distributed through the PDS since 2019-20 upto 31.03.2024.

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(b): The Government of India is supplying fortified rice under PMGKAY and other Schemes of the Government, etc. in all States and Union Territories (UTs) as a complementary strategy to combat hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies) particularly anaemia prevailing in vulnerable sections of society. The Task Force constituted for recommending actions/legislation on food fortification, in its meeting held in May 2016 recommended inter-alia mandatory fortification of rice for the Government programme in a phased manner. NITI Aayog in its “Strategy for new INDIA @75” also advocated the fortification of foodgrains to tackle micro-nutrient deficiency.

(c): The sub-regulation (4) of Regulation 7 of the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulation, 2018 notified on 02.08.2018 specified that every package of food, fortified with Iron shall carry a statement — “People with Thalassemia may take under medical supervision and persons with Sickle Cell Anaemia are advised not to consume iron-fortified food products.”

On 30.11.2023, a Committee headed by the Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was constituted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) to review the advisory on Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Anemia. Based on the critical review of scientific literature, evidence and international prevalent practices, the Committee has recommended the removal of warning label on fortified rice for patients with Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Anaemia. Accordingly, with the approval of the competent authority, the Food Safety & Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) vide circular dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024 has omitted the above sub-regulation with immediate effect.

(d): On the basis of studies available in India and abroad; and also the recommendation of FSSAI for mandatory rice fortification in India, the Government of India has undertaken scaling up of the supply of fortified rice in the country in a phased manner. Besides, there is a provision for an evaluation study of the Rice Fortification initiative on a concurrent basis by involving all the concerned stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, in association with other designated stakeholders under the overall guidance and monitoring of NITI Aayog.

(e): NITI Aayog has constituted a Core Committee to monitor the impact evaluation of the Rice Fortification Initiative. NITI Aayog and ICMR-NIN has taken up study in six districts in different regions of the country to evaluate the impact of iron-fortified rice on iron-deficiency anemia. United Nation's World Food Programme undertook efficacy and effectiveness studies on Rice Fortification which indicate a reduction in the prevalence of anemia amongst children and women.

(f): In order to improve the level of nutrition among beneficiaries covered under PMGKAY, advisory has been issued to all the States/UTs to procure millets and distribute to beneficiaries as per local consumption preferences and the guidelines issued by Central Government.

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) provides that pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years are entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms under ICDS and PM-POSHAN schemes. Higher nutritional norms are prescribed for malnourished children upto 6 years of age.

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