Fortification of Food

Why in news?

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Government is planning to make good quality fortified foods widely available.

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What is the background?

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- WHO estimates that **deficiency of key micronutrients** such as iron, vitamin A and iodine together affects a 1/3rd of the world's population.
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- A diversified diet that meets all nutritional requirements is difficult to provide, fortification of food is relied upon by many countries to prevent malnutrition.
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How Malnutrition affects Indian population?

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- Since iron deficiency contributes to **20% of maternal deaths** and is associated with nearly half of all maternal deaths in India.
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- Malnutrition extends to the children that women with anemia give birth to.
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- They often have **low birth weight,** are pre-term, and suffer from **poor development and lower mental abilities.**
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- Lack of essential nutrients in the diet makes growing children weak and make them under nourished.
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What is Food fortification?

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- It is the **process of adding micronutrients** (essential trace elements and vitamins) to food.
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- Food fortification is a **proven and effective strategy** to meet the nutritional needs of a large number of people across various sections of the society.
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- The efficacy of the fortification standards introduced by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will depend on enforcement.
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- **Reduces the risk of death from infectious diseases.**
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- Standards-based fortification can help advance overall health goals, starting with maternal health.
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- Fortified foods can help fill the gaps, in need of speedy remedial nutrition. It prevents and eliminates the nutritional deficiencies.
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What are the various efforts taken by India in this regard?

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- Milk cooperatives in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Assam and Maharashtra are fortifying their products.
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- Targeting children, the Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh governments have begun using **fortified oil for their mid-day meal schemes.**
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- West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are now distributing fortified wheat flour through the public distribution system, and the Maharashtra government has started a pilot project.
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- The FSSAI is also working with small local suppliers, for instance local flour grinding mills, to get them to add premixed micronutrients.
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Source: The Hindu

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