

Nourishing India

Food & Health Policy Insights



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Haryana clears a ₹5,000-crore agri-processing investment policy. CDSCO approves the country's first dengue vaccine, the revised Anaemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyan goes live, a national consortium releases its child-nutrition policy priorities, and India helps write seven new global food standards at Codex while FSSAI's front-of-pack labelling reform remains under consultation.



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Serving Size 1/2 cup (125g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 50
Total Fat 3g	53%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	13%
Dietary Fiber 3g	
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	
Vitamin C	
Calcium	
* % Daily Value*	



Editor's Note



**Policy &
Regulation**



**Food, Nutrition &
Public Health**



**Science &
Evidence**



**Global Standards &
Collaboration**

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Nourishing India. India's food and health policy landscape is evolving rapidly, with important developments emerging across regulators, ministries, scientific institutions and international standard-setting bodies. Yet these developments are often fragmented, making it difficult to assess their broader implications.

Released every two months, Nourishing India brings together the key policy, regulatory and scientific developments of greatest significance for industry, public health and the evolving regulatory landscape shaping India's food, nutrition and health ecosystem. Beyond reporting developments, the newsletter provides context, examines their implications, and identifies emerging policy and regulatory trends. We hope this inaugural edition becomes a valuable resource for policymakers, industry and other stakeholders. We welcome your feedback as we continue to refine future editions.

The Direction of Travel Is Clear

Taken together, this edition's developments point to a common direction of travel. Whether through investment incentives for food processing, an updated national anaemia programme, India's first dengue vaccine, new evidence on child nutrition, or India's growing voice at Codex, governments are increasingly leaning on evidence-based policy, stronger implementation systems and global regulatory alignment to improve health outcomes. For industry, competitive advantage will depend less on reacting to individual regulations and more on anticipating this broader trajectory — treating product quality, scientific evidence and regulatory readiness as strategic priorities rather than mere compliance exercises. Individual reforms may move at different speeds, but the direction is consistently towards greater accountability and closer integration of public health and food policy.

Regards,

Garvita Midha



Haryana Unveils Agri-Business and Agro-Processing Policy 2026

KEY TAKEAWAY — Haryana's new ₹5,000-crore agro-processing policy shifts from relying solely on subsidies to building an entire ecosystem of infrastructure, including testing labs and export support, making the state a stronger contender for food-processing investment.

As part of a package of 10 industrial policies approved by the Haryana Cabinet on 18 May 2026, the state launched the Agri Business and Agro Processing Policy 2026, replacing its 2018 framework. While the 2018 policy focused primarily on promoting agro-processing investments, the 2026 framework adopts a broader ecosystem approach by placing greater emphasis on infrastructure, technology, quality systems and export competitiveness alongside investment incentives. The policy aims to attract over ₹5,000 crore in investment by promoting a transition from primary agricultural production to value-added, export-oriented food processing. Beyond fiscal incentives, it expands support for cold chain infrastructure, food testing laboratories, research and innovation, and export-oriented agri-businesses, while proposing a Food Processing Centre of Excellence to strengthen technology adoption and capacity building for MSMEs and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs).

Policy Implications



For Policymakers



The policy integrates agroprocessing into Haryana's broader industrial strategy, placing greater emphasis on value addition, processing infrastructure, innovation, and export competitiveness.



Its success will depend on timely implementation of incentives and institutional support.



The VeK View

The policy signals Haryana's intent to position itself as a preferred destination for food-processing investment. For industry, its significance lies less in the individual incentives and more in the state's attempt to strengthen the broader investment ecosystem through infrastructure, technology adoption, quality systems and export-oriented support. If implemented effectively, these measures could lower operational bottlenecks and improve the state's competitiveness for food processing investments.



For Industry



The policy provides a more structured investment framework through capital support, time-bound approvals, and incentives for processing infrastructure and quality systems.



Its emphasis on value addition, innovation, and export competitiveness is expected to encourage investments across food processing, storage, logistics, packaging, and agri-tech.



A FSSAI's Front-of-Pack Labelling Standoff: A Year of Affidavits and No Label

KEY TAKEAWAY — A year on, India still has no final front-of-pack labelling rule but with the Supreme Court and Parliament both pushing for closure, industry should start reformulation and labelling readiness now, ahead of a likely mid-2027 deadline.

More than a year after the Supreme Court first directed progress on front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPL), India has yet to notify a final regulatory framework. The matter, arising from a public interest litigation seeking mandatory front-of-pack warning labels for foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), has prompted FSSAI to undertake further scientific review, product mapping, consumer research, and stakeholder consultations. During proceedings, the regulator informed the Court that it is evaluating alternative labelling approaches, including interpretative nutrition ratings and warning-label formats, drawing on international practices.

The issue has also received parliamentary attention. In July 2026, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution urged FSSAI to finalise the regulations in a time-bound manner, noting that the draft amendments released in September 2022 remain pending despite extensive stakeholder feedback. The Committee recommended simple, interpretative front-of-pack labels, including colour-coded indicators and warning labels for products high in sugar, to support informed consumer choice.

Even after the framework is finalised, the regulations will require approval through FSSAI's statutory process before notification and implementation. Given the regulator's standard transition period for labelling amendments, mandatory FOPL requirements are unlikely to become enforceable before mid-2027.

Policy Implications



For Policymakers

With both the Supreme Court and the Parliamentary Standing Committee now pressing for timely conclusion, the debate is shifting from whether FOPL should exist to how the final framework balances public health objectives, scientific evidence, consumer comprehension and industry implementation feasibility.



For Industry

Food businesses should begin evaluating reformulation strategies, packaging updates and labelling-system readiness now, even without a finalised model. The mandatory 365-day implementation runway built into FSSAI's amendment cycle provides real preparation time, but early planning materially reduces compliance costs and disruption once a framework is notified.



The VeK View

India's FOPL debate has become one of the country's most closely watched food policy reforms, shaped simultaneously by scientific consultation, stakeholder engagement and judicial oversight, with the Parliamentary Standing Committee now adding institutional urgency. The eventual framework will shape product reformulation and consumer communication for years.



B Anaemia Muk Bharat Abhiyaan: India Shifts from Prevention to Treatment

KEY TAKEAWAY — India's anaemia programme moves from handing out iron tablets to testing, treating and tracking individual cases, raising the bar for state health systems and creating new demand for diagnostics and fortified foods.

On 29 June 2026, at the 16th meeting of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda released the revised Anaemia Muk Bharat (AMB) Abhiyan Operational Guidelines, eight years after the programme was first launched under POSHAN Abhiyaan in 2018. The revision moves India's anaemia strategy from prophylactic supplementation alone toward therapeutic, case-based management — testing, treatment protocols and digital tracking rather than blanket iron-folic acid distribution.

What Changes

The existing 6×6×6 strategy expands into a 7×7×7 framework, adding low birth weight babies (0–6 months) as a seventh beneficiary group, an “Eating Right” dietary intervention, and a strengthened digital monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The approach itself shifts from T3 (Test, Treat, Talk) to T4, adding systematic tracking of beneficiaries for referral and follow-up. For severe anaemia and non-responders among pregnant and lactating women, intravenous iron therapy (Ferric Carboxymaltose and Iron Sucrose) has been added as a clinical option, with testing records for mothers and children converging into a unified AMB Abhiyan digital portal.

Policy Implications



For Policymakers

The shift to case-based management raises the operational bar for state health departments, which now need haemoglobin-testing and case-tracking capacity at scale, not just supplement distribution.



For Industry

Diagnostics firms, iron-folic acid and fortified-food manufacturers, and digital health platforms supporting state-level tracking gain a defined delivery channel; the “Eating Right” component also opens space for fortified-food producers.



C 'Let's Fix Our Food': A National Consortium Sets Child Nutrition Priorities

KEY TAKEAWAY — A national consortium has laid out its evidence-based wishlist for healthier food environments for children not binding today, but a strong signal of where FOPL, marketing curbs and school-food rules are headed next.

On 22 July 2026, the 'Let's Fix Our Food' (LFOF) Consortium released Priority Policy Actions to Promote Healthier Diets and Food Environments for Children and Adolescents in India. Although the recommendations are not legally binding, they consolidate scientific evidence across several policy areas already under active consideration, including front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPL), restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children, healthier school food environments, fiscal measures for HFSS foods, and salt and fat reduction strategies. As such, the report provides an early indication of the evidence base likely to inform future food and nutrition policy discussions. The report also introduces implementation resources, including the Nutrition Environment Assessment Toolkit for Schools (NEAT-S), an e-learning module on food labels, and nutrition education materials. Led by the ICMR–National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR–NIN), the initiative reflects nearly three years of collaboration involving UNICEF India, WHO, FSSAI, PHFI, WFP and other partners.

Policy Implications



For Policymakers

LFOF is an advisory platform, not a regulator - its recommendations carry no statutory force on their own, but they add a consolidated, multi-institutional evidence base alongside FSSAI's and ICMR's ongoing regulatory processes.



For Industry

Companies in the school food and children's snacking segments should treat the NEAT-S toolkit and LFOF's marketing-restriction recommendations as an early indicator of where future compliance requirements may be headed.

D India Approves Its First Dengue Vaccine

KEY TAKEAWAY — India's first dengue vaccine is approved for ages 4–60, opening a new market for manufacturers and cold-chain players positioned to complement, not replace, existing vector-control efforts.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) granted marketing authorisation on 21 July 2026 for the Dengue Tetravalent Vaccine (Live, Attenuated) Qdenga® manufactured by Takeda GmbH, Germany, and imported by Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India Pvt. Ltd. It is the first dengue vaccine approved in the country, indicated for individuals aged 4 to 60 years as two doses given three months apart.

The Evidence Behind the Approval : CDSCO's evaluation drew on clinical studies across more than eight countries and a pivotal Phase III safety and immunogenicity study conducted specifically in the Indian population. Qdenga® already holds approval in 42 countries, including the EU, UK and several Southeast Asian markets, plus WHO prequalification, with more than 24 million doses distributed globally and no significant safety concerns identified in post-marketing surveillance. The Ministry has stressed that vaccination is meant to complement, not replace, ongoing vector-control and surveillance efforts under the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme.

Policy Implications



For Industry

The approval marks the opening of India's dengue vaccine market, creating opportunities for vaccine manufacturers, contract manufacturers, cold-chain providers, distributors and immunisation partners. It may also encourage further investment in dengue vaccine research and development.

NFHS-6: India's Nutrition Numbers, 2019-21 to 2023-24

KEY TAKEAWAY — Stunting and severe wasting have fallen sharply since NFHS-5, but underweight prevalence barely moved — a reminder that undernutrition and rising overweight now coexist across India.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the National Family Health Survey – 6 (NFHS-6) on 29 May 2026, conducted during 2023-24 with the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai as nodal agency, covering nearly 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts. The figures below are the nutrition-specific indicators most relevant to this edition, drawn directly from the Ministry's official release.

Indicator	NFHS-5 (2019–21)	NFHS-6 (2023–24)	Change
 Stunting, children under 5	35.5%	29.3%	↓ 17% relative reduction
 Severe wasting, children under 5	7.7%	5.2%	↓ 32% relative reduction
 Underweight, children under 5	32.1%	31.8%	— Marginal decline
 Mothers consuming IFA supplements ≥100 days in pregnancy	44.1%	54.9%	↑ Maternal nutrition improved
 Mothers consuming IFA supplements ≥180 days in pregnancy	26.0%	37.8%	↑ Maternal nutrition improved
 Children breastfed within one hour of birth	41.8%	50.1%	↑ ~10 percentage-point rise
 Children age 6–8 months receiving complementary feeding with breastmilk	45.9%	59.5%	↑ Infant and young child feeding
 Children under 6 months exclusively breastfed	n/a	95.6%	i Single-round figure; no NFHS-5 comparator given

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, National Family Health Survey–(2026)

Analysis: NFHS-6 shows encouraging progress in reducing child undernutrition, particularly stunting and severe wasting, alongside improvements in maternal IFA supplementation and infant feeding practices. However, the marginal decline in underweight prevalence suggests that nutrition outcomes remain uneven. The survey also highlights India's continuing dual burden of malnutrition, reinforcing the need for policies that address both persistent undernutrition and the growing challenge of obesity.



A WHO Releases Updated Global Foodborne Disease Estimates

The eighth edition of this joint WHO/FAO observance, held annually since 2018, carried the theme “From burden to solutions — safe food everywhere.” Central to the observance was WHO’s release of updated Global Foodborne Disease Estimates (2000–2021)—the first update since the landmark 2015 report and the first to provide country-level burden estimates alongside global and regional figures. Developed by WHO’s Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERSG) with contributions from over 120 scientists, the estimates expand the scope from 31 foodborne hazards to include four heavy metals—arsenic, cadmium, lead and methylmercury.

The findings show that children under five account for 40% of the global foodborne disease burden (measured in DALYs), while unsafe food continues to impose an estimated \$110 billion annually in productivity losses and healthcare costs across low- and middle-income countries. By providing country-specific burden data for the first time, the estimates are expected to support more targeted risk prioritisation, surveillance and regulatory decision-making, while encouraging industry to strengthen preventive food safety systems and risk-based quality management across the supply chain.

KEY TAKEAWAY - Children under five carry 40% of the world's foodborne disease burden, and unsafe food costs poor countries an estimated \$110 billion a year — WHO's first country-level estimates since 2015 should sharpen where regulators focus next.

B Seven new Codex Standards adopted and what it means for Indian food exporters

KEY TAKEAWAY - India adopted seven Codex standards it helped develop and proposed the first-ever global standard for cashew kernels—a sign of its growing influence in international food standard-setting that could help ease trade friction for Indian food exporters.



India adopted seven Codex standards and guidelines developed under its own chairmanship or co-chairmanship at CAC49—two under India’s direct chairmanship (Dried Coriander Seeds and Fresh Curry Leaves) and five under its co-chairmanship.



The Commission also approved India’s proposal under the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPV) to begin work on a Codex Standard for Cashew Kernels, a category that currently lacks a dedicated international standard despite being one of the world’s most traded tree nuts.



India was also elected Co-Chair of the newly established Electronic Working Group on New Food Sources and Production Systems (NFPS), tasked with reviewing existing regulatory frameworks and identifying gaps in Codex risk-analysis principles for novel foods.



The Indian delegation was led by FSSAI CEO Shri Rajit Punhani, with technical experts from FSSAI and the Spices Board, while FSSAI continues to serve as India’s National Codex Contact Point (NCCP), coordinating the country’s Codex engagement through the National Codex Committee.

With global food trade exceeding \$1.7 trillion annually, India’s growing trade with Codex markets has strategic implications for exporters. Active participation in developing international food standards enables India to shape requirements that govern global markets, potentially reducing technical barriers to trade and improving regulatory alignment. The proposed Codex standard for cashew kernels could establish harmonised international quality and safety benchmarks for foodborne diseases, supporting greater consistency in trade and strengthening export competitiveness.



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