

Universal Supply of Fortified Rice Under PMGKAY Extended Until 2028: Key Highlights

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What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- What is Rice fortification?
- What is Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY)?
- What is National Food Security Act (NFSA)?

Why in News?

The Union cabinet, chaired by PM Modi, approved the continuation of the universal supply of fortified rice under all Union government schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), from July 2024 until December 2028.

The rice fortification initiative will continue as a central sector initiative with 100% funding by the Centre as part of PMGKAY (Food Subsidy), thus providing a unified institutional mechanism for implementation.

What is Rice fortification?

- **About/definition**

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** defines fortification as the deliberate addition of essential micronutrients to food to improve nutritional quality and provide public health benefits, with minimal health risks.

- **Need for fortification of rice**

- **Malnutrition in India**

- India faces high levels of malnutrition, especially among women and children.
- According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), anaemia affects a significant portion of the population, with every second woman being anaemic and every third child stunted.
- Deficiencies in iron, Vitamin B12, and folic acid are widespread, affecting health and productivity.

- **Fortification of Rice as a Solution**

- Rice, a staple food for two-thirds of India's population, is considered an ideal candidate for fortification to address malnutrition.
- Per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month, and fortifying it with micronutrients can help supplement the diet of the poor.

- **Fortification Process**

- Fortification technologies include coating, dusting, and extrusion, with extrusion being the most suitable for India.
- In extrusion, dry rice flour is mixed with micronutrients and water, then passed through an extruder to create fortified rice kernels (FRKs), which resemble regular rice.
- These kernels are blended with regular rice in a 10g FRK to 1 kg rice ratio to produce fortified rice.

- **Nutrient Content in Fortified Rice**

- According to FSSAI standards, 1 kg of fortified rice contains:
 - Iron: 28 mg-42.5 mg
 - Folic acid: 75-125 micrograms
 - Vitamin B12: 0.75-1.25 micrograms
- It may also be fortified with other micronutrients like zinc, vitamin A, and various B vitamins.

- **Cooking and Consumption of Fortified Rice**

- Fortified rice is cooked and eaten just like regular rice, and it retains its micronutrient levels after cooking.

- Packaging is marked with a logo ('+F') and labeled as "Fortified with Iron, Folic Acid, and Vitamin B12."
- **Progress of the Rice Fortification Initiative**
 - In 2015, PM Modi announced that rice distributed under government schemes, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Mid-Day Meal Scheme, would be fortified by 2024.
 - The Centre implemented the initiative in phases:
 - **Phase 1:** Integrated Child Development Services and PM POSHAN by March 2022.
 - **Phase 2:** PDS and welfare schemes in 112 Aspirational Districts by March 2023.
 - **Phase 3:** Full nationwide coverage by March 2024.
- **Cost and Scale of the Initiative**
- The annual cost of rice fortification is about ₹2,700 crore, less than 2% of India's food subsidy bill.
 - From 2019 to March 2024, 406 lakh metric tonnes of fortified rice have been distributed through the PDS.
 - There are 925 fortified rice manufacturers with a capacity of 111 lakh metric tonnes per annum, and rice mills have a capacity of 223 lakh metric tonnes for blending.
 - The government has invested ₹11,000 crore in developing the fortified rice supply chain.

What is Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY)?

- **About**
 - PM-GKAY is a food security welfare scheme announced by the Central Government in March 2020, during the **Covid-19 pandemic**.
 - It is a part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.
- **Objective:**
 - To feed the poorest citizens of India by providing grain through the Public Distribution System, to all the **priority households** (ration card holders and those identified by the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme).
 - Launched in 2000, Antyodaya Anna Yojana is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide highly subsidised food to millions of the poorest families.
- **Entitlement**
 - The eligible ration cardholders under NFSA 2013 were entitled to 5 kg free wheat/rice per person per month.
 - This was in addition to the 5 kg food grains already provided to the beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- **Implementing Agency:**
 - Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- **Merger of PM-GKAY and NFSA**
 - In December 2022, the Government amalgamated PMGKAY with NFSA.
 - After the merger, the entire quantity of 5 kg and 35 kg under the NFSA was made available free of cost.

- With this, India has a Central food security legislation which gives the poor a 'right' to receive 5 kg foodgrains free of cost.
- Earlier, beneficiaries paid a small price of Rs 3 per kg for rice and Rs 2 per kg for wheat.
- **Extension of PM-GKAY**
 - The scheme was extended for five years, starting January 1, 2024.
 - It was previously extended until December 31, 2023

What is National Food Security Act (NFSA)?

- *The NFSA, 2013 was notified to provide for food and nutritional security, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.*
 - It provides a **legal right** to persons belonging to "eligible households" to receive food grains at subsidised price/central issue prices under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
 - State governments are tasked with identifying Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY – poorest of the poor) and priority households (PHH) beneficiaries within the TPDS-covered population.
 - Every person in the PHH category receives 5 kg of food grains per month at – **rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg and coarse grain at Re 1/kg.**
 - Each Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) household gets 35 kg of food grains per month.
 - *The Act covers up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidised food grains (overall **67%** of the total population).*
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Q.1. What is the purpose of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)?

PMGKAY aims to provide free food grains to vulnerable households in India, ensuring food security during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, by distributing 5 kg of wheat or rice per person per month.

Q.2. How does rice fortification help combat malnutrition in India?

Rice fortification adds essential micronutrients, such as iron, folic acid, and Vitamin B12, to regular rice, helping to address widespread deficiencies and improving the nutritional intake of two-thirds of the Indian population.

Source: [What is fortified rice? Why did Centre extend initiative for its distribution in schemes | The Hindu](#) | [My Scheme](#) | [Down to Earth](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/universal-supply-of-fortified-rice-under-pmgkay-extended-until-2028-key-highlights/>

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