

Biofortified Seeds with Focus on Nutrition, Food Security in Works

Efforts also on to improve India's ranking on the Global Hunger Index, says an official

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New Delhi: India has begun work on development of biofortified seeds for pulses, wheat, mustard and millets as well as fruits and vegetables to up the nutrient content to a desired level, a move aimed at ensuring nutrition and food security, a senior government official told ET on the condition of anonymity.

According to the official, the effort is also to improve India's ranking on the Global Hunger Index where the low ranking for India is not because of low availability of food but for the low nutritional value of the existing crops that results in malnutrition in India's newborn children and females.

"The nutrition content of most of our mass consumption crops is sub optimal. While India is self-sufficient in food crops, the challenge before the government is to increase the nutritional value to reduce cases of malnutrition and anaemia in the country," the official added.

Biofortified seeds with higher iron content would produce red potatoes and red okra (bhindi) as well as different

Nutritional Gains

New seeds coming up for cereals, pulses, millets, fruits and vegetables

New seeds to have higher content of iron and zinc



OTHER MICRONUTRIENTS TO ALSO GO UP TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF MALNUTRITION

Move aimed at ensuring nutritional security along with food security

Govt hopes this will improve India's ranking on GHI



GHI SCORE TREND FOR INDIA

2000 **38.4 Alarming**

2008 **35.5 Alarming**

2015 **29.2 Serious**

2023 **28.7 Serious**

shades of banana with higher zinc content but such produce could be up to 10 times more expensive than the existing varieties in the market.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, along with its 113 research institutes spread across India, are developing biofortified seeds for different crop varieties with focus on enhanced content of iron, zinc and other micronutrients while ensuring that the new seed varieties adapt to local climatic conditions.

It expects to replace the entire seed stock for these crops in four-five years with new seeds being developed and distributed through government channels

including the National Seeds Corporation.

India slipped to 111 position out of 125 countries on the Global Hunger Index 2023 with a score of 28.7 on 100-point scale categorising India's severity of hunger as 'serious' and no significant gains since 2015.

The government, however, had contested the data, calling it a "flawed measure of hunger that doesn't reflect India's true position".

The GHI score is based on four indicators, including under-nourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality, that together capture the multi-dimensional nature of hunger.