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On the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on 16th October 2020, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will release a commemorative coin of Rs 75 denomination to mark the long-standing relation of India with FAO. Prime Minister will also dedicate to the Nation 17 recently developed biofortified varieties of 8 crops.

The event marks the highest priority accorded by the government to agriculture and nutrition, and is a testament of the resolve to completely eliminate hunger, undernourishment and malnutrition. It will be witnessed by Anganwadis, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Organic and Horticulture Missions across the country. Union Agriculture Minister, Finance Minister and WCD Minister will also be present on the occasion.

#### **India and FAO**

The journey of FAO in making the vulnerable classes and masses stronger, economically and nutritionally, has been unparalleled. India has had a historic association with FAO. Indian Civil Service Officer Dr. Binay Ranjan Sen was the Director General of FAO during 1956-1967. The World Food Programme, which has won the Nobel Peace Prize 2020, was established during his time. India's proposals for the International Year of Pulses in 2016 and the International Year of Millets 2023 have also been endorsed by FAO.

#### **Combating malnutrition**

India has rolled out an ambitious POSHAN Abhiyaan targeting over 100 million people with the aim to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia, and low birth weight. Malnutrition is a global problem with two billion people suffering from micronutrient deficiency. Nearly 45% of deaths among children are linked to malnutrition. Appropriately, it is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.

Aligning with the international priority, the development of nutritionally rich varieties of crops with elevated levels of micronutrients iron, zinc, calcium, total protein, quality of protein with high lysine and tryptophan, anthocyanin, provitamin A, and oleic acid, and reduced level of anti-nutritional factors etc. has been accorded top priority by the government. The National Agricultural Research System

under the leadership of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) developed 53 such varieties during the last five years. There was only one biofortified variety developed prior to 2014.

### **Transforming Indian thali into nutri-thali**

The 17 recently developed biofortified varieties of 8 crops to be dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister will have up to 3.0-fold increase in nutritional value. The rice variety CR Dhan 315 has high zinc; wheat variety HI 1633 rich in protein, iron and zinc, HD 3298 rich in protein and iron and DBW 303 and DDW 48 rich in protein in wheat; Ladhawal Quality Protein Maize Hybrid 1, 2 and 3 rich in lysine and tryptophan; CFMV1 and 2 of finger millet rich in calcium, iron and zinc; CLMV1 of little Millet rich in iron and zinc; Pusa Mustard 32 with low erucic acid; Girnar 4 and 5 of groundnut with enhanced oleic acid and yam variety Sri Neelima and DA 340 with enhanced zinc, iron and anthocyanin content.

These varieties, along with other food ingredients, will transform the normal Indian thali into nutri-thali. These varieties have been developed by utilizing the local landraces and farmer's varieties. The high zinc rice has been developed from landraces of Assam rice collected from Garo hills and those of finger millets from Gujarat collections of Dang district.

ICAR has started Nutri-Sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI) programme for promoting family farming linking agriculture to nutrition, nutri-smart villages for enhancing nutritional security and location specific nutrition garden models are being developed and promoted by KVKs to ensure access to locally available, healthy and diversified diet with adequate macro and micronutrients.

The production of bio-fortified crop varieties will be upscaled and linked with government programmes of mid-day meal, Anganwadi etc. to reduce malnutrition and make India Kuposhan Mukta through naturally enriched food ingredients. This will also usher in higher income of farmers and will open new avenues of entrepreneurship development.

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