

Mustard edible oil producer



Background and motivation

Based in Rajasthan, this small mustard oil manufacturing company was established around the 1970s. The company fortifies its oil – sold across India – with vitamin A and D with the aim to help reduce micronutrient deficiencies in India's population. The company primarily began fortifying oil after being contacted by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), which are working (among other areas) to encourage and improve companies' edible oil fortification practices. The organizations informed staff about fortification, relevant standards, and operating procedures, delivered training, technical support, and assistance, and provided free premix. After an adjustment period, GAIN and IIHMR encouraged the company to take ownership of its fortification practices. The company is incentivized to continue fortifying in the knowledge that, one day, oil fortification will be mandatory. So, by engaging in the process now, the company remains up to date on fortification processes and ensures that it has standards and operating procedures in place.

Current fortification practice

There are a lot of premix options on the market, with prices ranging from EUR 3 (equal to INR 250) to EUR 10 (equal to INR 800) for one bottle of premix. Fortifying edible oil is estimated to cost around EUR 0.012 (INR 1) per liter, or EUR 1.21 (INR 100) per 100 liters. However, for the company, the main factor which influenced their selection of premix provider (ADE - Oil by Anmol Chemicals & Supplements) was accessibility and adherence to the food safety guidelines set by the

FSSAI. Anmol also has a manufacturing plant in nearby Faridabad, Haryana, which ensures ease of distribution.

When asked if other premix brands were ever used, the staff member interviewed shared that, during the adjustment period, the company was provided with free quality premixes (namely Pristine) from the fortification development organizations GAIN and IIHMR. Thus, at this time, factors such as availability, quality, and cost of premixes were not considered. However, after the provision of premixes halted, it was decided to select a premix provider that was more easily accessible.

Reaching FSSAI fortification standards

The following are steps taken by the company to ensure that its oil is fortified to FSSAI standards, and that the product reaches consumers with adequate fortification levels.

- **Rigorous quality testing**

To ensure their fortified oil products are of high quality and up to FSSAI standard before being distributed to market, oil samples are tested both internally and by a local government lab every six months. This is in-line with the actions of other edible oil manufacturers. In addition, GAIN and IIHMR provide twice-yearly quantitative testing for their products by an NABL-accredited lab.

Lab testing

Two types of lab tests can be used to check oil fortification levels – a qualitative test and a quantitative test. The first is a ring test, which requires a minimal lab setup and uses test tubes and antimony trichloride solution to sample the product. This method is deemed inefficient and is often avoided if possible. Meanwhile, quantitative testing is more advanced, and, for this, a company must send samples to an NABL-accredited lab.

■ Keeping up to date with requirements

The company relies on development organizations working in the sector of edible oil fortification to update staff on fortification requirements and guidelines.

■ Processes alignment

With regards to SOPs, the staff follow guidelines recommended by the FSSAI and rely on training and technical support from development organizations.

■ Product tracking

As per standard industry practice, a record of the premixes used is kept for each batch of product.

Challenges

Keeping up to date on, and staying informed about, the latest fortification requirements, guidelines, and legislation is a major challenge. Interviewed staff believe companies need additional support to ensure oil is fortified to standard. They suggested that a standardized course on edible oil fortification should be designed for companies, as this would help ensure consistency in practices and SOPs for all in the edible

oil value chain. To complement this, regular on-site training should be implemented to maintain staff knowledge.

The interviewed staff state that there is no definitive channel through which to provide regular input for FSSAI to maintain rights to use the 'F logo' of its fortified oil products, which remains a challenge. (see 'Interviewer's comment box').

Interviewed staff shared that the company has received visits from food safety officers from the Government of Rajasthan regarding general monitoring and concerns of the overall quality of the oil produced. However, time allocated to provide staff with additional information, technical and regulatory updates or more hands-on support is lacking. This was particularly stressed for the topic of food fortification.

Interviewer's comment:

There is an online endorsement process that companies can follow to become accredited and officially use the logo. Many companies have not completed this process, either because they are unaware of it or are waiting for FSSAI to mandate edible oil fortification. This increases the risk of companies placing the logo on fortified products without first being accredited by the FSSAI.

Staff interviewed shared that it is difficult for their brand to be recognized by consumers when competing against medium and larger oil producers such as Fortune, Dhara, Dabur, Patanjali, and Engine. The company is reliant on distributors to ensure market reach and product sales. A recognition system may not be helpful if consumers do not know the brand.

