

Soyabean and Mustard edible oil producer



Background and motivation

Based in Rajasthan, this company was established in the 1980s as an edible oil manufacturer. However, the business has expanded over the years and is now considered a medium-sized enterprise – and currently produces a wide range of refined oils, mainly from mustard and soyabeans, in addition to soya meal and dairy products.

Their fortification journey began in 2017, when staff were approached by the organizations Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), working in the sphere of oil fortification (among others). The organization shared information on fortification and its purpose, standards, and operating procedures, and provided much-needed training, technical support, and free premix. Following this, the company began fortifying its edible oil, which consists of both mustard and soya-based products. The company also produces mustard pungent oil (Kachi Ghani Oil).

Interviewed staff shared that the company is motivated to keep fortifying its oil and is creating SOPs with the knowledge that edible oil fortification may become mandatory in India in the coming years.

Current fortification practice

The company uses a premix from the company [Pristine](#), which was initially provided by GAIN and is now bought directly from its supplier in Jaipur. Other brands, such as Hexagon, have been used previously, but the company changed back to Pristine on account of quality. The company bases its choice of premix on quality, stating it has had some issues with maintaining adequate levels

of fortificant in the final product, which may be related to the quality of the premix. Their belief is that Pristine is currently the best option on the market for edible oil fortification. The average cost of fortifying edible oil is roughly EUR 0.012 (INR 1) per liter and EUR 1.21 (INR 100) per 100 liters, but cost is not an influencing factor in the company's choice of premix.

Reaching FSSAI fortification standards

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

- **Rigorous quality testing**

The company has a process in place to test oil samples regularly. Initially carried out by government labs, the company also began sending samples to the renowned National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited labs for quality checks after seeing inconsistencies in results. The company now prefers to have samples tested solely at NABL-accredited labs to ensure products are of a high quality and fortified to the correct standard. At present, this is paid for by the company or conducted by a development organization.

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. However, this method is deemed inefficient and often avoided if possible. Meanwhile, quantitative testing is more advanced, and, for this, a company must send samples to an NABL-accredited lab.

■ Aligning processes

The company closely follows FSSAI guidelines to ensure that it remains aligned with current fortification practices. Its management team has developed an automated manufacturing process so that the fortification pre-blend preparation is mechanized. To ensure staff remain skilled and informed on fortification, the company is dependent on training and technical support from development organizations.

■ Tracking products

In-line with the edible oil industry, the company maintains a record of premixes used in each batch of oil. This can help identify whether issues with the quality or quantity of fortificant in the final product occurred during the process of adding the premix to the oil, or whether there were issues with the quality of the premix.

■ Keeping up to date with national requirements

For the past five years, the company has relied on development organizations working in the field of oil fortification to provide updates on national requirements. The quality control team has attended a few training workshops organized by development organizations and assigned a dedicated employee to oversee the oil fortification process.

Challenges

The company's interviewed staff shared they were unaware of a definitive channel through which to provide regular input to FSSAI to maintain the right to use the 'F+' logo, which is used to identify fortified foods (see interviewers comment box).

Interviewed staff expressed that a recognition system, directed at consumers, is necessary if their good practices are to be understood. The company believes that it has the potential to compete with other large manufacturers, such as Fortune, Dhara, Dabur, Patanjali, and Engine. However, showcasing the efforts it takes to ensure products are of high quality is important if consumer preferences are to be swayed.

Food safety officers from the Government of Rajasthan have inspected the facility numerous times to check and monitor the overall quality of the edible oil. 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.

Interviewers comment:

There is an online endorsement process that companies can follow to become accredited to officially use the '+F' logo. Many companies have not completed this process, either because they are unaware 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.

Interviewed staff shared that it is difficult for the companies 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.

