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Vitafoods India 2025 set to propel nutraceutical industry growth and sustainability

OUR BUREAU, MUMBAI

INDIA'S leading B2B events organiser, Informa Markets in India, is set to host the third edition of Vitafoods India from 5th to 7th February 2025 at Pavilion 1-2, Jio World Convention Center, Mumbai. The event will bring together leaders, influencers, and decision-makers from the nutraceutical, functional food, and dietary

supplement industries, showcasing a dynamic representation of the sector.

With India's nutraceutical market projected to grow from USD 4 billion in 2020 to USD 18 billion by 2025, with a CAGR of 13.6% expected from 2025 to 2030, the event will serve as a hub for distributors, procurement managers, product development experts, regulatory affairs professionals, and R&D specialists.

This year, Vitafoods India will host 136 domestic and 23 international exhibitors, along with over 19 educational sessions with more than 35 expert speakers who will share insights into the industry's future. The event is expected to attract over 8,000 visitors, reinforcing its role as a premier networking and knowledge-sharing platform for the nutraceutical ecosystem.

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FDA proposes requiring at-a-glance nutrition information on front of packaged foods

OUR BUREAU, MUMBAI

THE U.S. Food and Drug Administration has announced an important step to provide nutrition information to consumers by proposing to require a front-of-package (FOP) nutrition label for most packaged foods. This proposal plays a key role in the agency's nutrition priorities, which are part of a government-wide effort in combatting the nation's chronic disease crisis. If finalized, the proposal would give consumers readily visible information about a food's saturated fat, sodium and added sugars content—three nutrients directly linked with chronic diseases when consumed in excess.

The proposed FOP nutrition label, also referred to as the "Nutrition Info box," provides information on saturated fat, sodium and added sugars content in a simple format showing whether the food has "Low," "Med" or "High" levels of these nutrients. It complements the FDA's iconic Nutrition Facts label, which gives consumers more detailed information about the nutrients in their food.

Chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes, are the leading cause of disability and death in the

U.S. With 60% of Americans having at least one chronic disease, such diseases are also the leading drivers of the nation's \$4.5 trillion in annual health care costs. A large body of research indicates that a major contributor to this problem is excess consumption of saturated fat, sodium and added sugars. There is a proliferation of foods in the food supply that are considered ultra processed, which often contain high levels of these nutrients. The Nutrition Info box is focused on providing accessible information to help consumers quickly and easily identify how foods can be part of a healthy diet.

"The science on saturated fat, sodium and added sugars is clear. Nearly everyone knows or cares for someone with a chronic disease that is due, in part, to the food we eat. It is time we make it easier for consumers to glance, grab and go. Adding front-of-package nutrition labeling to most packaged foods would do that. We are fully committed to pulling all the levers available to the FDA to make nutrition information readily accessible as part of our efforts to promote public health," said FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf, M.D.

The proposed Nutrition Info box is informed by a substantial body of

research conducted by the FDA, including a scientific literature review, consumer focus groups and a peer-reviewed experimental study. In 2023, the FDA conducted an experimental study of nearly 10,000 U.S. adults to further explore consumer responses to three different types of FOP labels. The purpose of the experimental study was to identify which FOP schemes enabled participants to make quicker and more accurate assessments of the healthfulness of a product based on the levels of saturated fat, sodium and added sugars displayed. The experimental study showed that the black and white Nutrition Info scheme with the percent Daily Value performed best in helping consumers identify healthier food options.

"Food should be a vehicle for wellness, not a contributor of chronic disease. In addition to our goal of providing information to consumers, it's possible we'll see manufacturers reformulate products to be healthier in response to front-of-package nutrition labeling. Together, we hope the FDA's efforts, alongside those of our federal partners, will start stemming the tide of the chronic disease crisis in our country," said FDA Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods Jim Jones.

The proposed Nutrition Info box is part of the White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health to reduce diet-related diseases by 2030. The Nutrition Info box, the recently updated "healthy" claim, the FDA's work to develop a "healthy" symbol and the draft Phase II voluntary sodium reduction targets are key aspects of a government-wide approach to improving nutrition and reducing chronic diseases in the U.S. These efforts can help consumers more easily identify foods recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and may assist them in reducing their consumption of certain nutrients that can be found in foods that are commonly considered ultra-processed. The FDA is committed to continuing its comprehensive, science-based activities to create a healthier food supply, empower consumers with information and support lifelong healthy eating patterns.

The proposed rule, if finalized, would require food manufacturers to add a Nutrition Info box to most packaged food products three years after the final rule's effective date for businesses with \$10 million or more in annual food sales and four years after the final rule's effective date for businesses with less than \$10 million in annual food sales.

India emerges as one of the top markets for methylcobalamin in Asia-Pacific region

LAXMI YADAV, MUMBAI

INDIA has emerged as one of the top markets for methylcobalamin, an active form of vitamin B12, in the Asia-Pacific region due to the prevalence of vegetarian and vegan populations.

Vegetarian diets in India often lack adequate vitamin B12, making supplements like methylcobalamin essential. According to a list of countries with the highest rates of vegetarianism released by the World Atlas in 2023, India topped the list with 38 percent of its total population identifying as vegetarians.

In 2020, the market for B-complex vitamins (including Vitamin B12) in India was valued at approximately USD 281 million, highlighting its critical role in addressing widespread deficiencies. Methylcobalamin is extensively used

in dietary supplements and functional foods due to its high bioavailability, role in energy production, cognitive health, and efficacy in addressing neurological disorders and anemia. It plays a vital role in several physiological processes, including red blood cell production, nervous system functioning, and DNA synthesis.

The global vitamin B12 market was valued at USD 194.3 million in 2023 and is projected to grow to USD 346.6 million by 2032 at a CAGR of 6.8%. The demand is fuelled by a rising prevalence of B12 deficiency due to dietary habits, particularly in vegetarian and vegan populations, a rising prevalence of chronic diseases like anemia and neuropathies, and rising awareness in people about dietary supplements and healthy lifestyle. Moreover, rising geriatric population globally is also expected

to fuel the market growth of the methylcobalamin market.

Dr. Sanjay Agrawal, a leading pharmaceutical consultant and Scientific Advisor of Alkomex GBN USA, said, "Methylcobalamin, a crucial nutrient for cell multiplication, blood formation, neurological health, and protein synthesis, is used as a supplement in patients with vitamin B12 deficiency and diabetes. It has been used in clinical trials to treat some nutritional and other diseases, including Alzheimer's disease and rheumatoid arthritis. As an auxiliary agent, it protects neurons by promoting nerve regeneration and inhibiting glutamate-induced neurotoxicity. In recent experimental and clinical studies, several lines of evidence have suggested that methylcobalamin may have analgesic properties. For example, methylcobalamin reduced pain behaviors in diabetic neuropathy, low

back pain, and neuralgia. It improved nerve conduction, accelerated nerve regeneration, and reduced ectopic spontaneous discharges of injured primary sensory neurons."

Most Indians are deficient in methylcobalamin, especially due to the prevalent vegetarian diet. The growing number of individuals suffering from B12 deficiency due to dietary habits is driving a surge in demand for high-quality B12 supplements, which is expected to drive market expansion, he said.

With growing demand and widespread use of methylcobalamin, it is essential to address the regulatory gaps. Health experts and advocacy groups urged authorities like the Union Health Ministry and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to act swiftly to ensure safety, quality, and proper labelling.