

'ZINC DEFICIENCY RISING IN INDIANS'

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

High zinc deficiency was found in Kerala, T.N., A.P., Manipur and Meghalaya.

Rising carbon dioxide levels can accelerate zinc deficiency in crops and thus in human consumption, cautions a new study titled 'Inadequate zinc intake in India: past, present and future' by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The study states that inadequate zinc intake has been rising in India for decades, causing tens of millions of people to become newly deficient in it. The study added that the highest rate of inadequate zinc intake was concentrated mainly in the southern and northeastern States with rice-dominated diets: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya.

"Rising carbon dioxide levels in the coming decades could accelerate this trend. National grain fortification programmes, increased dietary diversity, bio-fortified crops, and reduced carbon dioxide emissions could all make a difference to slow or reverse the course," the study noted.

Inadequate zinc intake can have serious health consequences, particularly for young children, who are more susceptible to contracting malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and pneumonia, when suffering from zinc deficiency. The presence of zinc plays a critical role in human immune systems.

"Rice is poor in [the presence of] zinc, causing higher rates of zinc inadequacy in diets that rely heavily upon it. Overall urban populations, and wealthier urban groups in particular, showed higher rates of inadequate intake as well, due to a higher proportion of nutrient-poor fats and sugars in the diet," the study said.

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