

# MAP ON REGIONAL FOODS PROPOSED TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION

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In a bid to counter nutritional inadequacy among infants, the government will develop a map highlighting local foods of different States, Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said at the fifth meeting of the National Nutrition Council on Thursday.

The announcement by the Minister comes days after the government's first-ever survey on nutrition highlighted that only 6% of children between the age group of 6 and 23 months received a minimum acceptable diet. As per the study, the prevalence of minimum acceptable diet was as low as 1% in Andhra Pradesh. It was the highest in Sikkim with only 36% children being adequately fed. In 10 out of 30 states, less than 5% of children aged 6 to 23 months received a minimum acceptable diet. In fact, the findings of the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey were raised several times at the meeting by different members of the government's largest body on nutrition.

"The solution to tackling malnutrition lies in promoting regional cropping patterns and embracing local food that are rich in protein," a press statement released by the Women and Child Development Ministry quoted Ms. Irani.

The map, to be developed by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Deendayal Research Institute, was among the measures suggested to address the issue of food inadequacy in our nutrition system, according to Member (Health and Nutrition), NITI Aayog, V.K. Paul.

"Children have to eat more often — twice a day between six to nine months, thrice between nine and 12 months and four times a day beyond 12 months. They also must eat diverse foods, which should include cereals, protein, fat, sugar or jaggery, milk and fruits. Both meal frequency and diverse diets together make an acceptable diet," explains Mr. Paul.

A subordinate panel on nutrition had in its meeting in June also proposed to develop policy guidelines on "agri-nutri" and suggested setting up of a national advisory panel under Joint Secretary and Mission Director of Poshan Abhiyaan.

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