

**Shikha Sharma**

National President, Food & Nutrition Council

Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman  
Honourable Finance minister  
Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

**Subject: Seeking for Food and Nutrition sector specific financial concessions, incentives and policies.**

Every nation must look after the holistic wellbeing of its greatest national resource i.e., the human resource and good nutrition is a pre-requisite for both human and economic development. In the last 20 years, there has been an improvement in the nutritional status of the Indian population. This improvement results from not only changes in food intake but also socio-economic factors, increased availability of potable water, lower morbidity and improvement of health facilities. However, as per the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is amongst the 88 countries that is likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025. The recently published factsheets from NFHS-5, and the findings from Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2016 also speak on a similar lines, with indicators for stunting, wasting, anemia, child malnutrition not showing not very positive signs of improvement.

Significant incidence of early marriage and childbearing have been found as amongst the important causes of nutrition issues, due to the adverse intergenerational bearing on health, education and employment.

Taking due cognizance of the situation, the Government of India recently launched Mission POSHAN 2.0, which aims to implement a comprehensive, unified strategy to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcome, with renewed focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition in the country. POSHAN 2.0 is an umbrella scheme covering the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Anganwadi Services, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, and National Creche Scheme.

Investing in nutrition is one of the most cost-effective drivers for development and prosperity. Balanced nutritional value is amongst the best tools to address social inequalities, as food security involves the health and well-being of the individual in their biological, economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects.

With this as a context, we arrived at recommendations towards preventing and reducing the burden of malnutrition in India and improving the business environment for Women led and Women focussed industries.

On behalf of the National Food and Nutrition council, I, Shikha Sharma, President National Food and Nutrition Council would like to propose the following are recommendations in developing the right Ecosystem in place so as to support in the path of Gender parity both in terms of rights, social status and income levels:

1. Workshops for Micro and small food enterprises for the latest sustainable processes should be conducted by academia regularly to address pool shortage of manpower.
2. Women farmers in our country are playing a bigger role these days because men are shifting to non-farming jobs, migrating to cities. Still, our women farmers get a raw deal. They are underpaid, our laws do not recognize them as farmers & they have no access to bank loans & govt. subsidies and left unaddressed in property rights.



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3. Provide incentives for Women Farmers to take and sustain in areas of Sericulture, Mushroom Cultivation, Aquaculture, Dairy and Bakery.
4. Provide platforms for Women Entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas and facilitate the process of ideation to Proof of Concept (POC) and successful POC to execution.
5. In a world of ubiquitous digital connectivity, networking supply chains to purchasing systems to public health databases will help people understand their personal food narratives as well as at the scale of cities and nations to build tools for the people to easily track & displayed information will unlock latent value by being radically transparent & more actionable.
6. Packaged foods are formulated with empty calories & addictive 'bliss points'. Even ingredient labels are not always trustworthy. To fill regulatory gaps & create transparency, Govt should encourage automated technological initiatives / devices developed by materials science & biomedical engineers that let the consumers precisely measure their dietary needs, metabolic reactions to food & environments by analyzing food samples at molecular levels and gain new confidence in their buying choices.
7. To develop a partnership model representing a new kind of alliance for food innovation. As the food innovation landscape becomes more open and enables smaller – scale players to compete with established stakeholders, it will be critical to build sustained connections across traditional barriers of scale, competition & industry by catalyzing with crowd sourced funding from eminent institutions, hospitals, supermarkets or any venture capital arm that aims to make direct equity investments and share expertise to grow small businesses and elevate their products.
8. Promote weekend farming / terrace farming since growing food is an empowering engaging experience. Participating production starts with kids, who are gaining basic food literacy through edible education curricular at school. As they learn to grow food, their values shift and they see themselves as more than just consumers.
9. Promote usage of rock salt and Sulphur free sugar as a safer and healthier option since this is an Eco –friendly choice and also does away with many side – effects.
10. To provide a Government backed Women focussed Fund to support on seed capital.
11. To provide working capital funds for Women led enterprises during these challenging times to ensure the sustain of these entities.
12. To create a technology platform (similar to GEM portal) for Women led and for Women enterprises and products.

The impact that would come about with having the right Ecosystem in place, we would see the improvements in the following areas:

- a. Health and Nutrition of the Women and Children - which is contributed through higher income levels.
- b. Contribute towards faster achievement of our Country being a \$5 Trillion economy.
- c. Improving the literacy and educational levels of Women.
- d. It would facilitate in improving the social and income status.

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e. Achieve the Government's targets on Women empowerment and thereby increase the Women representation in the Parliament.

f. Creating the Women Leaders who can lead the Country in various areas and Enterprises.

g. Creating sustainable growth based Women led businesses.

Thanking you,



Shikha Sharma

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Director, Kanti Sweets India RPS LLP.

Director, Kanti Lab Services Pvt Ltd.

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Dr. Shikha Gupta - Uttar Pradesh State Food & Nutrition Council.

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