

# Pulses missing from Indian platter: FAO

## Union Govt Policies Excluded Proteins, Says Expert Group

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**Bangalore:** If you think Indians have a balanced diet, you may be wrong. But the blame cannot be pinned on junk food alone. The problem lies with policies of the government which don't encourage the growth of pulses, an expert working group of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) observed.

The team was at the St John's Research Institute from March 2-5

to evaluate the quality of protein in the diet of Indians.

"The best approach for optimal health and well-being is to prioritize protein quality so that we eat neither more nor less than what we really need, and spend wisely on protein-rich food," said the FAO team. The team is evaluating staple diets of people from various countries and coming up with a report on how to make them protein-sufficient. The report focuses on measuring protein quality in foods from animal and plant sources.

Speaking to TOI, Dr Anura V Kurpad, head of Nutrition, St John's Research Institute, and president, Nutrition Society of India, said some dietary surveys have shown that Indians mainly



**FEELING THE PULSE:** The FAO team was at St John's Research Institute to study the nutritional quality of Indian diet patterns as part of a global project

get proteins from serials, pulses and milk. "Consumption of rice and wheat, a major component of the Indian diet, has limited the quality of amino acids. Pulses,

milk and meat are rich in quality proteins. But over the decades, the production of pulses has decreased. The Food Security Bill has ignored the importance of

pulses and thereby this rich source of protein is missing from the platter. Agricultural policies have to look into these concerns," said Anura, who worked with the FAO team. According to him, there is need to define the protein quality in food sources.

J Albert, nutrition officer, FAO, who is stationed in Rome, said, "The Italian diet is one of the healthiest. "Vegetables, fruits, fish and olive oil, sources of quality proteins, are major components of staple Italian food. Being an American and having lived in Italy for the past 20 years, I find that Italians follow a nutritious diet. Wealthy countries consume excess of meat proteins, which is not a good sign. A case in point is the increasing incidence of

## Malnutrition-diabetes link

**A** child suffering from malnutrition is more susceptible to diabetes than an adult, said Robert Weisell, a representative of FAO who visited Bangalore. "The ramifications of malnutrition in childhood can turn more serious in adulthood. Non-communicable diseases like diabetes can affect such children. A baby can survive only on breast milk for about six months. After that, he must be given milk, boiled eggs and mashed pulses regularly," he added.

obesity in the US," she said.

It was in its meeting in 2011 that FAO decided to conduct a research on protein quality in human diet. "We are currently in the process of collecting data from various countries. Just as rice is widely grown and consumed in India, corn is giv-

## TIMES VIEW

**I**ndian food patterns and diet may not meet the standards set by world health organizations. But in a country where bringing food to the plate is a challenge, a balanced nutritious diet may be the last thing on the platter. However, the government could do well to absorb the suggestions by FAO in tweaking its agricultural policies and Food Security Bill to address the concern of low protein in Indian food habits. The two must collaborate in coming up with low cost healthier and balanced food options. Also, economic and agricultural growth must incorporate nutritional concerns and safety nets.

en way too much importance in African countries. Good quality proteins are also missing from the African diet," said Dr Warren Lee, FAO representative.