Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Friday gave a clarion call to the scientists including those of nutrition, health and agriculture to join forces to tackle the ‘hidden hunger’ of malnutrition among the vulnerable sections of the society.

India may be a food surplus country but there is no reason to be complacent and the worrisome fact is that significant sections continue to suffer from malnutrition due to lack of a healthy diet.

The VP was speaking at the valedictory function of the international conference on ‘Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs)’ held at the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) which is celebrating its centenary year.

While hailing NIN’s contributions in helping fortify the nation’s nutrition diet over the years, Mr. Naidu wanted scientists to introspect on what more needs to be done to tackle the irony of having obesity on one side and lack of proper diet on the other side. Mr. Naidu said there is a greater need for scientists of agriculture, nutrition and health to collaborate to improve or bring a change in agriculture practices like crop diversification and help in growth of nutritive high yielding varieties among food crops for a better public health, he said, and pointed out that India stood 103 in the world hunger index.

He also released educational and promotional short films on daily healthy diet, required nutrition and cleanliness brought out by the NIN. Former directors like Mohan Ram, Kamala Krishnaswamy, Bamji and Sivakumar were felicitated on the occasion.

Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Directorate of Health Research Balram Bhargav hailed NIN’s R&D efforts over the years in fortifying nutrition among Indian population and wanted it to be ready to play a bigger role as the Government intends to increase the health budget to 2.5% by 2025.

The institute is also likely to play a key role in the forthcoming review of the Centre’s ongoing health and nutrition enhancement scheme for children in association with NitiAayog. NIN Director R. Hemalatha and seminar in-charge J. Padmaja also spoke.