



## **FSSAI, NCDC establish mechanism to prevent food-borne diseases' spread**

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FSSAI and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have decided to establish a communication and coordination mechanism to prevent and restrict the spread of food-borne diseases.

The country's apex food regulator has issued a directive to state food safety departments across India to establish direct contact with district surveillance officer or the rapid response team of the Integrated Disease Control Programme (IDSP) under NCDC.

For this, the state food safety departments would recognise and nominate a food safety officer as member of the rapid response team for food safety surveillance and emergency situations. They would identify the emergency arising out of ingestion of foodstuff contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms or chemicals.

Garima Singh, director regulatory compliance division, FSSAI, said, "All food safety commissioners has been advised to request the health secretary of their respective states to nominate the food safety officers (FSOs) of each district as members of the rapid response team."

"There are certain activities required to be undertaken by the FSOs after the alert or intimation of any food-borne disease incident through the IDSP," she added.

Singh said, "The activities include collection of information about the outbreak, investigation and examination in coordination with the district surveillance team about the outbreak like site investigation for operational hygiene, sample collection, assessment of the severity of the problem, identifying the spread of the contaminated food in the region, planning to stop the spread of food-borne diseases, preparation of the report on the incident within a fortnight of the occurrence of the incident, sending across the hierarchy of the food safety ecosystem and maintaining a record of the meetings taken place during the investigations thereunder."

The designated officers were also asked to monitor the situation regularly, while the FSSAI has asked to complete the establishment of the coordination mechanism within two weeks.

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It is pertinent to mention here that recently a virus called Nipah outbreak was reported in Kerala which claimed several lives.

The virus spread from contaminated fruits eaten by bats. And even the United Arab Emirates (UAE) banned fruit import from Kerala due to this outbreak.