



Officials destroy 315 litres of milk during drive against adulterated food

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GUWAHATI: In a continuous and massive drive against adulterated food products, government officials have destroyed 315 litres of milk and fruit supply belonging to more than eight fruit vendors from Guwahati within the past month.

Cases have been initiated against two milk suppliers for selling sub-standard products. Food checks have also been conducted at various eateries across the city and notices have been issued to five hotels and sweet shops namely, Ajay Hotel, Sharma Sweets, Rookman Sweets and Salasar Kitchen to improve their kitchen conditions.

A team comprising the minister of state for health & family welfare, Pijush Hazarika, along with officials of the department, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) are making surprise visits to various hotels, milk vans, sweet shops and factories to check the quality of products being sold to customers.



On the spot testing of milk and its products are also being conducted at shops using a mobile van. Notices have been issued to the sellers of spurious food products and test samples of their products are being sent to the SPHL for a comprehensive report to check for violation of safety norms.

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During the drive that started in the first week of June, the team has visited different areas including Khanapara, Ganeshguri, Fancy Bazaar, Bharalumukh, Beltola and Rukminigaon.

Fruits adulterated and ripened artificially using calcium carbide, milk mixed with substances like water and milk powder, was destroyed during the drive.

Further, if the products are found to be sub-standard, a penalty which may extend up to Rs 5 lakhs is being imposed on the person or manufacturer selling, storing or distributing such products.

Similarly, the cases of misbranding are also being sent to the court of the adjudicating officer and a fine of up to Rs 3 lakhs is being imposed. And if the food is found unsafe for consumption, a case is being initiated at the judicial court and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakhs or life imprisonment is being imposed.

"Food adulteration is an illegal practice and causes serious health hazards to consumers. The food safety drives are being conducted across the state to ensure that the food reaching end customers is safe and healthy," said LR Nampui, food safety official of Kamrup (M) while speaking to G Plus.

Govt welcomes FSSAI's proposal to impose life imprisonment for food adulteration

With the aim to form more stringent laws to curb the pernicious practice of food adulteration, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has proposed life imprisonment as the maximum punishment or a fine of Rs 10 lakhs for those adulterating food products. The FSSAI has issued the draft amendments to the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, which was notified in 2011.

Appreciating the move, Anupam Gogoi, food analyst to government of Assam told G Plus, "The decision of FSSAI to increase the penalty is commendable and I welcome it."

"The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 is a very recent act that got implemented in 2011. We still have a long way to go before the act is fully implemented and thus, I feel, that the adulterators are always a step ahead of the act and it's very challenging to eradicate adulterated products altogether. Implementation of stricter laws will surely take us closer to reaching our goal," he further added.

Any person who "adds an adulterant to food so as to render it injurious for human consumption with an inherent potential to cause his death or is likely to cause grievous hurt, irrespective of the fact whether it causes actual injury or not, shall be punishable for a term which shall not be less than 7 years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and also fine which shall not be less than Rs 10 lakhs," the proposed amendment states.

The FSSAI has also proposed increase in the punishment for obstructing, impersonating, intimidating and threatening or assaulting a food safety officer in order to enforce the law at the ground level. The regulatory body has recommended imprisonment of not less than six months and up to two years, besides penalty of up to Rs 5 lakhs for such acts of intimidation or assault. At present, the imprisonment is up to three months and the fine is up to Rs 1 lakh.

Food Safety on Wheels: mobile van keeping a check on spurious food products

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The recent drive against food adulteration is being conducted with the help of 'Food Safety on Wheels' (FSW) - a mobile van to assess food quality on the go. The FSW was inaugurated in Guwahati on May 13 by the health & family welfare minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma.

With the number and spread of food testing labs in the country being grossly inadequate, these mobile units provide food quality assessment at the doorstep of citizens through its food safety van. The initiative has been started in Guwahati and extended to other parts of the state.

Apart from conducting simple tests for common adulterants in milk, water, edible oil and other items of food of daily consumption, this mobile unit is also being used for awareness building around food safety, hygiene and promoting healthy eating habits in citizens at large and for conducting training and certification programme for food handlers and supervisors in the food business.

"Awareness is the key to knowing what to eat and what not to eat. We can only try to maintain hygiene and regulate food quality but the general public has to be aware and informed about the repercussions of consuming unhealthy food," says Anupam Gogoi, food analyst to government of Assam.

In addition, the mobile unit is being used by the field functionaries in the state to enhance their outreach and conduct surveillance activities even in far-flung areas with the hope to bring about a paradigm shift in food safety ecosystem in the country.

"Milk and its products are consumed everyday by a large number of people. Therefore, the quality of milk is very important. Officials have been directed to take stern action against all those involved in adulteration practice," mentioned minister Pijush Hazarika.