



Three Sri Lankan labs obtain FSSAI authorisation for F&B certification

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Food regulator FSSAI has authorised three labs from Sri Lanka to issue certificates to food and beverage products. These will not be rejected at Indian checkpoints now.

A delegation of experts from the country's apex food regulator had recently visited the island nation for the purpose.

The Indian audit team comprised of the officials from FSSAI, the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and the Export Inspection Council (EIC).

The delegation was satisfied with the infrastructure and testing facilities of the Sri Lankan laboratories they have visited so far.

The Export Development Board of Sri Lanka (EDB) in May 2018 said that it had submitted the names of five local state-owned and private sector labs for the approval of the Indian food regulator to allow these labs to issue certificates, which will ensure that the certified food and beverages aren't rejected in India.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI confirmed that out of the five proposals that were received from Sri Lanka, three labs were authorised.

Though India is the third biggest export destination for Sri Lanka, it was often noticed that Indian agencies had either been rejecting Sri Lankan food consignments or putting them through re-tests in India.

“Indian non-tariff barriers, approvals, procedural delays and clearances are still present in trade between the two countries despite the existence of a free trade agreement (FTA),” stated EDB.

Complying with the Indian standards has been a major market access challenge for Sri Lankan exporters. EDB, after identifying the matter, had initiated the discussion with FSSAI to solve the problem.

In May, the delegation of Indian officials and the FSSAI chief visited Sri Lanka for the stakeholder meeting. They discussed the costs and delays at the port of entry in India due to standard testing.

EDB suggested that this problem could be avoided if the Indian authorities agreed to test the products for Indian standards through competent and accredited labs located in Sri Lanka and accepted test reports and compliance certificates issued by these labs. The Indian regulator agreed on considering EDB’s request to register laboratories to test with Indian standards.

EDB had also organised an awareness workshop on import regulations and clearance process for food and beverage products to India to create awareness on new food regulations in India.

Agarwal said, “This has been a part of the project for streamlining imports from the neighbouring countries of India. Recently, the apex food regulator approved labs in Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan as well for the purpose of food testing and certification, so that food trade between the neighbouring countries remained hassle-free.”

Meanwhile, the recent initiative taken by FSSAI has expedited the clearance at the borders. They have also developed an alert system for rejected shipments, which includes the reasons for rejections.