

# Vardhan launches 'food safety mitra' scheme for scaling up 'Eat Right India' movement

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On the lines of 'arogya mitras', the government on Wednesday launched a scheme for engaging 'food safety mitras' to sensitise street food vendors on hygiene aspects and assist businessmen to comply with standards and facilitate licensing and registration. Apart from strengthening food safety, this scheme would also create new employment opportunities for the youth, particularly with food and nutrition background, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said.

The initiative is aimed at scaling up the government's 'Eat Right India' movement. 'Food Safety Mitra' would undergo training and certification by FSSAI to do their work and get paid by food businesses for their services.

"The 'Eat Right India' movement is a crucial trigger for the much needed social and behavioural change. This campaign along with the 'Fit India' movement can achieve huge success if the right strategy is adopted and efforts are made to reach out to every section of the society," Vardhan said at the function to commemorate the World Food Day. Vardhan further stated that people should adopt Mahatma Gandhi's messages of eating less, eating safe and healthy food, and also reduce wastage of food while developing the habit of sharing surplus food.

Citing the example of polio to highlight multi-sectoral approach, Vardhan said, "All of us have to take up this responsibility in our own capacities. I believe that together we will be able to develop new approaches to combat challenges to health and society." The theme for this day was 'Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger World'. To mark the occasion, the health minister also launched the 'Eat Right Jacket', and 'Eat Right Jhola' to strengthen food safety administration.

The 'Eat Right Jhola', a reusable cloth bag, shall replace plastic bags for grocery shopping in various retail chains, Vardhan said. Since on repeated use, bags are often contaminated with microorganisms and bacteria, proper and regular washing of cloth bags is essential to ensure safety and hygiene. These cloth bags are being provided on rental basis through a private textile rental service company, he said.

The 'Eat Right Jacket' will be used by the field staff. This jacket has a smart design to hold tech devices such as tablets/smart phone, a QR code and RFID tag for identification and tracking. Apart from providing safety to field staff on duty, this would bring in efficiency, professionalism and transparency in food safety administration and bring in a sense of ownership and visibility of FSMs.

The FSSAI has partnered with the Domestic Workers Sector Skill Council (DWSSC) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to launch a training course for domestic workers and homemakers across the country. In the first phase, one lakh domestic workers and homemakers will be trained through training partners of DWSSC in association with RWAs. This would be scaled up in due course.