THE TIMES OF INDIA

CIFT, Kochi to define limits for naturally-occurring formaldehyde in fish

TNN | Jul 9, 2019

KOCHI: After developing the rapid detection kit for testing fish quality, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) is trying to identify the ad-hoc limits for naturally-occurring formaldehyde in fresh and marine fishes. CIFT, the national referral laboratory for disputes on fish tests, has been asked by the food safety standards authority of India (FSSAI) to look into the issue, following a directive by Goa high court.

“We will be sampling all commercially-available fishes and shell-fishes and establish the limits within a year. Till then, FSSAI has fixed the limit for naturally-occurring formaldehyde in fresh fishes (4ppm) and marine (100 ppm) ones. After this, there was a discussion that testing kits are of no use. But, people fail to understand that the kit cannot decide what is naturally inside the fish. The test looks at what has been applied on the outside,” said CIFT director Ravishankar C N.

“The fish is laced with ammonia or formaldehyde on its outer layer so that it looks fresh and shiny. As the only laboratory with NABL accreditation for testing adulteration using formaldehyde, CIFT will have a final say in all disputes between governments and opposing parties when cases are booked,” he said. When food safety officials conduct raids and find

adulterants, the samples are sent to state laboratories. If a case is booked and the opposing party disputes it, CIFT can be approached for a final decision.

CIFT's rapid detection kit includes testing strips, reagent solution and standard chart for colour comparison. The strip must be rubbed on the surface of fresh fish/meat. Then 1-2 drops of the reagent solution is added to get a colour change. These kits would help consumers know if the fish is adulterated or not instantly.

CIFT scientists said that the aim of the test is to detect the presence of ammonia, formaldehyde and sodium benzoate that are used as a preservative. Ammonia is used to make fish look fresh and shiny, formaldehyde increases shelf life, while sodium benzoate reduces the microbial levels.