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No scientific data to prove non-veg, including poultry, seafood responsible for coronavirus

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MANGALURU: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is working in close coordination with department of consumer affairs on reports of mustard oil being adulterated with other low cost edible oils, its chief executive officer G S G Ayyangar said at an Assocham event held in New Delhi.

“Different type of edible oil is being used in different parts of the country, in this part and eastern part, mostly people take mustard oil. Reports are there that mustard oil is being adulterated with low-cost oils. We are working on that in close coordination with Department of Consumer Affairs,” said Ayyangar at an Assocham national conference on nutrition and functional foods.

There is no scientific data till date to prove that coronavirus spreads through chicken, mutton and other non-vegetarian food including seafood, he noted. “Lot of misconception is there that coronavirus will spread through chicken and mutton, there is nothing like that. It is scientifically not proven, I am a scientist, I will not buy that argument,” he added.

He also said, “It is a virus, like many other viruses, definitely now it is in the limelight, so we have to take all precautions. Government is making all efforts to isolate the virus, when once we are able to isolate the virus then it takes some time to find a vaccine to counter the virus which depends on the complexity of the virus.”

On an optimistic note, the FSSAI chief also said, “In India, we are very good in handling these viruses, it is a matter of time. We have to take precautions and be on our toes. India being a tropical country, when once the temperature crosses 35-36 degrees centigrade, no virus will survive.”

Sharing his views on whether there is a need to maintain extra hygiene in terms of food business especially in places like poultry farms and others in wake of coronavirus, Ayyangar said, "Definitely, you have to eat hygienic food, on that there are no two words. But till date there is no scientific data to prove that chicken, mutton, sea food is responsible for coronavirus."

Talking about his priority as FSSAI chief in terms of addressing malnutrition, Ayyangar said, "This is my tenth day, it is too early for me to give comments on that. I am meeting all my colleagues, we will sit together and one-by-one we will be working out."

He also said that government is trying its level best to ensure that different parts of the population should get the food security that it requires.

"In the last few years, lot of good work has been done in FSSAI - almost 700 food products' standards have been laid and additives' work has also started. But much work needs to be done particularly about the nutritional supplements. There is a system of scientific panels where the industry is also involved," said Ayyangar.

He urged the industry to work together with FSSAI to ensure that country's huge population gets complete, balanced and correct quantity of food materials, so there are no nutritional deficiencies in the days to come.

Nandita Gupta, joint secretary, ministry of consumer affairs said that businesses have a huge role to play towards ensuring food security in the country even as the most vulnerable sections of the society still rely on the Government.

Arjan De Wagt, chief nutrition, UNICEF India said that malnutrition not only increases infant mortality, but also affects the lifelong performance of people in academics and sports.