

FSSAI to train agencies donating food to ensure quality

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By Priyanka Sharma, New Delhi, Aug 23: The Food Safety Standard and Authority of India (FSSAI) has set new norms for all food recovery agencies and food business operations who donate pre-packed or prepared food items to the needy.

For this, the FSSAI has started a training procedure for all surplus food distribution organisations.

Now, these food recovery agencies will have to follow the guidelines of collecting food, its handling and distribution, labelling and standard operating procedures and maintaining hygiene standards so that surplus food reaches the needy.

After three kids from Delhi's Mandawali area allegedly died of starvation last year, the Delhi government ordered a probe into it which revealed that the cause of death was malnutrition.

For Deepak Dhawan, 34, an assistant manager at SBI cart - it was a push and eye-opener to start an initiative called 'Jeevan Hi Udeshya' to donate food to the underprivileged section of the society.

For the last one year, Deepak, a resident of West Delhi's Shadipur area, donates food to the needy at different parts of the city.

"In the last one year, I have come across various challenges like hygiene, maintenance, storage and timely distribution of food which is now sorted after getting trained by the central food regulating agency," he said.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI told ANI, "We should have an ecosystem of such agencies who can collect and donate food. We are trying to find out simpler and technology solutions through an online module network. Previously, people were not aware of whom they should contact for donating the surplus food."

"Earlier, there were no regulations for these food recovery agencies. Our big concern is that these agencies should be properly trained to provide surplus food to needy people. Also, these agencies might require support and there would be some people who wish to support them with supply chain solutions, food storage system and transportation," he added.

"So far, the apex food regulator has registered 33 food recovery agencies for food safety

practice. There are over 150 food recovery agencies in India, however, all are not registered with us," said Agarwal.

The department is revamping its website named -- India Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) -- which is the government's nodal website for food donation activities.

Recently, FSSAI has launched a 24-hour helpline number (+917428688776) to prevent wastage of food.

According to the book, 'Transforming Food System for Rising India', the country has an acute burden of malnutrition.

The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) estimates show that around 30 per cent of children were too thin for their age and gender (underweight) and 38 per cent of children under five years were too short for their age and gender (stunted), the book said.

According to Global Hunger Index 2014, India ranks 103rd out of the world's 119th hungriest countries.

As per FSSAI, major food waste sources are at weddings, religious feasts and social gatherings. More than 50,000 tonnes of food is wasted in such gatherings annually.

In the Indian scenario, about 196 million people are undernourished.