

Huge demand for CIFT kit to detect formalin in fish

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KOCHI: Food safety officials from across the country are approaching the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Kochi, for the rapid detection kit to identify the presence of formalin and ammonia in fish. CIFT director C N Ravishankar said that the laboratory was getting calls from all parts of the country and food safety officials were coming to Kochi to collect the rapid detection kits being made at the lab for immediate use. "Recently, we have had teams from several states across the country, including Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Assam and even Nepal," he said. Meanwhile, following the crisis over the presence of formalin being detected in fish, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a guidance note for use of formalin to preserve fish. The note said that formalin (formaldehyde in water) is common adulterant in fish. Traders and suppliers use it to extend storage life of fish and artificially improve the sensory attributes. The FSSAI referral laboratory on fish and fish products, CIFT has reported the presence of residues of these chemicals in freshly-marketed fish, interstate fish consignments and even in ice during storage. The FSSAI said that consumption of fish adulterated with formalin can cause health conditions such as abdominal discomfort, vomiting, renal injury, etc. The note asks the consumers to wash fish thoroughly with running tap water as formaldehyde is soluble in water. The fish should be cooked thoroughly to an internal temperature of 75 degrees celsius or above, as heat from cooking can also help remove formaldehyde. Ingesting large amounts of formaldehyde, which is not permitted for use in food as per Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2011, can generally cause severe abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury and possible death.