

FSSAI unveils Food Innovators Network to fine-tune India's food sector

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In a bid to support the realisation of the Indian food processing industry's massive potential for value-addition through government policy and regulatory assistance, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched the Food Innovators Network (FINE) programme recently.

While the country has developed a vibrant entrepreneurial landscape and steadfastly strengthened its position as the third largest start-up ecosystem globally, its food sector has emerged as high-growth and high-profit domain.

In conjunction with the Government's Start-Up India and Digital India initiatives, FSSAI, through FINE, aims to bring together innovators and start-up entrepreneurs to provide innovative solutions and transform the country's food safety and nutrition landscape.

The country's apex food regulator, through the medium of FINE, will engage with entrepreneurs working to address challenges in areas such as affordable and accessible food testing, ensuring availability of healthy food, educating consumers towards nutritious choices and reducing food waste.

It will mentor these start-ups to effectively provide innovative new-age solutions to tackle these challenges through the best of innovation, technologies and business models. Start-ups working in the said areas can apply to be a part of the FINE network by visiting the microsite created. The deadline for applications is October 15, 2018. As a part of FINE, to support budding entrepreneurs, the regulator is setting up a FSSAI buddy system wherein every start-up in the network will be assigned a buddy from the regulatory body. The buddies will aid the start-ups in navigating their way through the regulatory space, and thus enable ease of doing business.

The event also witnessed the launch of a first-of-its-kind, FoSTaC Plus Course, a spin-off of the Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme by FSSAI. The course, titled

Go-to Guide for Food Start-ups, serves as a regulatory walkthrough for start-ups in this sector. It details the procedures related to licensing and registration, labelling and packaging, safety, health and sanitary requirements as well as other statutory and regulatory compliances as per the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. FSSAI launched FINE during the TiE Delhi NCR Food and Food Services Summit 2018. Speaking about the journey of the apex food regulator over the years, Madhavi Das, chief management services officer, FSSAI, emphasised on the regulators philosophy of Trust but Verify.

She added that the regulator had come a long way from being a mere enforcer of food laws to enabling food businesses to comply with regulations. “Making them responsive would not only improve their business practices, but also improve the entire food ecosystem,” Das said.

She added that as the Indian food industry was poised for huge growth by increasing its contribution to world food trade every year, it is important to understand the dynamics around the start-up ecosystem as they are here to stay. At the launch of the Food Innovators Network, FSSAI also announced the Eat Right Food Innovation Awards, which would be presented to selected start-ups transforming the food and nutrition landscape of the country in December this year.

The FINE initiative by FSSAI is a reaffirmation that a robust regulatory environment can enable a favorable macro-economic environment to nurture the growth and development of food-based start-ups, and hence, the overall economy of the country.