

## FSSAI celebrates 'World Food Safety Day'

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently observes 'World Food Safety Day'. This year's theme-'Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow', signifies that food safety is a shared responsibility between the Government, producers and consumers and everyone has a role to play to ensure the food we consume is safe and healthy. The resurgence of Covid 19 pandemic has brought the focus on food, nutrition, health, immunity and sustainability. It is important to ensure availability of safe food in the markets as any contamination arising from food can result in addition expenditure on the healthcare system in the form of food-borne diseases.

On the occasion, **Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare** highlighted that World Food Safety Day is celebrated world-wide to draw attention that food is not only an agricultural or trade commodity but also a public health issue and hence, food safety has to be seen as an essential public health function. *"The call to action is to ensure that the food we eat is safe and nourishing and the food safety must be integrated across all stages from farm to table and all should converge to ensure it is a shared responsibility. Food safety forms an essential component of health and nutrition policies. Significant steps should be taken to inspire action to help, prevent, detect and manage any food borne risks for contributing towards food security, human health, economic prosperity, market access and sustainable food system,"* he added.

Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare mentioned the importance of food safety and how we can work together to fight issues related to unsafe food. He further highlighted that this pandemic has acted as an eye opener as it offered us an opportunity to strengthen India's food safety systems and keep our food supply safe in the current situation.

As part of the World Food Safety Day celebration, FSSAI, announced the winners of the Eat Right Creativity challenge organized online for school children to unleash their creativity by inculcating the message of 'Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Diets'. Over 26,000 entries were received across India, 640 entries were awarded as Regional Winners and 250 entries were identified as National Winners under this challenge. Further, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Chennai, Lucknow and Pune were identified as winners of the NeTProFaN challenges for conducting mass awareness activities in last one year.

An indigenous food testing equipment - Precision Iodine Value Analyzer (PIVA) was also recognized by FSSAI during the occasion. This home-grown kit is developed by CSIR along with Central Scientific Instruments Organization (CSIO) and can determine the Iodine Value (degree of unsaturation) measurement in edible oils and fats in a faster, better, and cheaper way. Currently, PIVA has been calibrated and tested for Coconut, Sunflower, Mustard, Palm, Rice Bran, Soyabean, Groundnut, Olive Oil and Ghee. This new development is a part of the ongoing effort to strengthen the food testing capabilities by introducing the quick and advanced Food Testing Kits. FSSAI has, thus far, approved 65 rapid food testing kits/devices and this is the newest addition to the approved kits/ equipment.

In the last one year, FSSAI has provided technical and financial assistance to States/UTs for creation of necessary infrastructure, testing equipment and mobilizing resources for carrying out special camps, inspections, awareness drives, etc. by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). FSSAI has dispersed almost INR 65 crores to the States/ UTs as part of the MoU in the year 2020-21.

FSSAI introduced an online training course, under its flagship program - Food Safety Training & Certification (FoSTaC), on safe food and hygiene protocols required during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 2.6 lakhs Food Safety Supervisors (FSS) have been trained so far under the COVID training course.

The year 2020 also witnessed the nation-wide rebirth of the FSSAI's online network. FSSAI responded to field situation in real time and introduced various regulatory reforms for enhancing efficiency with 'Ease of doing Business' including simplification in the processing of applications for licensing and registration, return filing, licence validity, inspections and other compliances to ensure that businesses were able to work diligently even in these trying times. Improvement in existing portals of licensing & registration through migration to the new age digital platform called Food Safety Compliance System (FOSCOS) along with better e-Governance for delivery of various e-services were some of the noteworthy changes.

On the regulatory front, some important regulations were finalized such as FSS (Safe Food and Healthy Diets for School Children) Regulations, 2019 to ensure wholesome food to school children by not allowing food items high in fat, salt and sugar to be sold and advertised within school premises; limiting industrial TFA (trans fatty acids) to not more than 3 per cent in all fats and oils by January 2021 and not more than 2 per cent by January 2022 as well as

notification of Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020, prescribing the labelling requirements of pre-packaged foods. A set of amendments have been proposed by FSSAI to revamp Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Business) Regulations. The Food Regulator is also releasing new regulations to facilitate and speed up import clearances by expanding the coverage across the point of entries for quality assurance and testing of food imports.

Focus on periodic risk-based inspections, third party audits, surveillance drives to ensure safety and quality of food products available in the market such as sale of adulterated edible oil, khoa and honey remained a significant area for building food safety efforts.

Recruitment of manpower at FSSAI headquarters and across regional offices in addition to opening up of new office locations at Mundra, Ahmedabad etc. remained a focal area for expanding the reach of the food regulator.

Through the 'Eat Right India' movement, FSSAI continued to transform the food ecosystem of the country through its benchmarking and certification schemes and cluster initiatives to improve the infrastructure and hygiene compliance levels of food establishments be it Jails, Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Places of Worship, Street food vendors as well as Fruits & Vegetables Markets. So far, 28 Street Food Hubs and over 100 campuses are now certified.