

Twenty-nine food safety labs in 25 states & UTs taken up for upgrades

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Under the Central sector scheme of lab upgrades, 29 state food safety laboratories in 25 states and Union Territories (UTs) have been taken up so far for upgrades, while FSSAI has approved proposals of nine microbiology laboratories in eight states and UTs.

According to the country's apex food regulator, proposals for setting up of 13 microbiology laboratories in 13 states and UTs are under consideration while a total grant-in-aid of Rs 126.95 crore has been released for the upgrade of these laboratories, so far.

FSSAI is implementing a Central sector scheme to strengthen the food testing system in the country, including provision of mobile food testing labs (SOFTeL) with a total outlay of Rs 481.95, while the time frame for the implementation of the scheme is 2016-17 to 2018-19.

The states where microbiological lab has been started grounding include one each in Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal, and two in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The scheme envisages an outlay for strengthening of 45 state food testing labs in total with assistance given to at least one food testing laboratory in each state and two in larger states.

A non-recurring grant of around Rs 10 crore each for upgrade of state food laboratories for procurement of three major equipment, namely ICP-MS, GC-MSMS and LC-MSMS, setting up of a microbiology lab, creation of infrastructure for sophisticated equipment and setting up of microbiological laboratory, is being given besides recurring grant of Rs 35 lakh per cent year for professional services, consumables and contingencies as per the requirement of the respective state lab.

For north-east states which do not have any food testing laboratory, the scheme provides a grant of Rs 3 crore each for setting up a new food testing laboratory there.

According to an official with FSSAI, the upgrades of the labs would enable the state machinery to analyse the regulatory and surveillance samples drawn by the food safety officer (FSO) within the shortest possible time frame along with safety parameters in food samples such as heavy metals, pesticide residues, antibiotics and drug residues and naturally-occurring toxic substances. Besides, microbiological tests can also be carried out efficiently in compliance of FSSAI standards.

FSSAI also aims at introducing online laboratory data management system through laboratory information management system (LIMS), once the upgrade work gets completed.