

## **FSSAI writes to Chief Secretaries to allow food labs to function in lockdown**

Wednesday, 29 April, 2020

**Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has written to the state Chief Secretaries to allow food laboratories including private labs certified by the apex food regulator, to function during the lockdown.

FSSAI CEO Dr G S G Ayyangar in the letter has urged the state governments to provide necessary passes to the workforce of the labs so that they can operate uninterruptedly during such trying time.

“It has been pointed out by some laboratories that they are finding it difficult to obtain necessary movement passes for their staff and as a result, their functioning is being adversely affected. I would therefore like to request you to kindly instruct local administration to issue necessary movement passes to the staff of the FSSAI recognised private food labs in your state as per their request so that these labs can function during the lockdown,” reads the letter written by the CEO to the state Chief Secretaries.

FSSAI has recognised many private food laboratories in addition to the government labs to meet the requirement of the food industry. There are presently 182 notified primary labs across India, 18 referral laboratories and 12 national reference laboratories.

The apex food regulator says that these labs need to function even during the lockdown period as they attend to samples not only from the industry but also enforcement samples from the food safety officers of the state governments.

But due to the lockdown the working of the private labs has impacted severely, as local administration was not allowing passes to the staff.

It is pertinent to mention here that many high risk category food businesses, as per the condition of the licence, are required to test their products periodically. Besides, in some industries like dairy, FSSAI has mandated a scheme of testing and inspection which requires testing by labs on a regular basis at various stages of processing. These tests are required to be conducted in NABL-accredited FSSAI notified labs only.