

## Health Minister Harsh Vardhan at the inauguration of the state-of-the-art National Food Laboratory of FSSAI (Photo: @PIB\_India)



### Govt, private firms tie up to ensure food safety

26 Aug 2019 [Neetu Chandra Sharma](#)

- FSSAI launches PPP model in food safety amid rising cases of adulteration
- 23.4% samples was found adulterated in 2016-17, while in 2018-19, 26.4% samples were adulterated

**New Delhi:** Faced with a shortage of manpower and equipment for food testing, the government has launched a public private partnership (PPP) initiative to ensure food safety in the country.

Cases of food adulteration have increased over the last three years and the government is looking to private players for investment to augment its efforts in ensuring food safety.

More than 23.4% of the total samples analysed in 2016-17 were found adulterated, while 26.4% of the samples were found contaminated in 2018-19, according to the latest data available with the Union ministry of health and family welfare.

Uttar Pradesh remains the worst hit in food adulteration with 45% (of the samples tested in the state), followed by Jharkhand (40%), and Tamil Nadu (37%). As many as 36% (23,441) of the total of 65,028 adulterated samples detected in India in three years were found in Uttar Pradesh, according to a public laboratory testing report presented in the Lok Sabha last month by the health ministry.

"There is a shortage of manpower in government laboratories across India, which hampers food testing functions of the laboratories. There are very few technicians and housekeeping personnel in many labs. We have realised that the PPP model is unique in the food safety ecosystem," said Pawan Agarwal, chief executive officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the apex food regulator, which works under the health ministry.

"We have been investing in strengthening state and referral labs with advanced equipment, microbiological testing facilities, apart from capacity building activities for all the laboratory personnel. The government provides major equipment and scientists but for manpower in various sections of the laboratories and raw materials such as glass and chemicals, we can look at a fair bidding process to loop in private players," Agarwal said.

The food regulator implemented the PPP model in the food safety sector on Friday by launching the National Food Laboratory (NFL) at Ghaziabad. The lab has a comprehensive array of equipment with the latest technologies and facilities to conduct analysis as per global accreditation standards for testing and calibration.

"This PPP model in the food testing ecosystem will synergize the efficiency of the private sector and the regulatory control of the government in an efficient manner. This advanced food-testing infrastructure will also help us fight any instances of food adulteration and will become more robust in the years to come," said Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Union minister of state for health.

FSSAI said that NFLs will also be established at Mumbai and Chennai. "For an effective regulatory food environment, a robust food testing ecosystem is important. This is essential to evaluate the quality and safety of food, the compliance to standards and also to identify any emerging risks from farm to fork," said Harsh Vardhan, Union minister of health and family welfare.

The Centre has also recently created 493 new posts for FSSAI, bringing the overall strength of the organization to 824. It is also trying to increase the network of food-testing laboratories.