## DownToEarth

## Only 10% of milk in India unsafe for human consumption, says FSSAI

The food safety authority conducts a new study with a more standardised approach after its 2011 study had "major drawbacks"

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Tuesday 13 November 2018



■ The FSSAI says it has taken the largest sample size this time and conducted its largest systematic survey of milk. Credit: Getty Images

Only 10 per cent of the milk sold in Indian markets is contaminated and the major reason behind this is poor farm practices, says the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The food authority found this after conducting a quantitative survey with a standardised approach as against to its 2011 survey, which had "major drawbacks" as it did not include any parameters related to contaminants and focused on quality rather than safety concerns. The 2011 survey had said that most Indians are consuming detergents and other contaminants through milk.

The FSSAI's National Milk Quality Survey, 2018, which was released on Tuesday, says milk in India is largely safe. Pawan Aggarwal, CEO of FSSAI, said, "This report has been released as there was a lot of misinterpretation of information provided in the survey conducted in 2011". A similar report released recently by the authority had said that 25 per cent of the food samples it tested this year were adulterated, which included milk also.

But this time, the FSSAI says it has taken the largest sample size (6,432 samples) and conducted its largest systematic survey of milk. Aggarwal adds that they have standardised the parameters and found that only 638 (9.9 per cent) of the samples were adulterated. While earlier, the samples were only checked for presence of water and detergent and percentage of fat and SNF (solid not fat) in them, this survey set standards for all quality parameters, adulterants and contaminants.

The parameters it standardised included four quality parameters, 12 adulterants and four contaminants (antibiotics, pesticide, Aflatoxin M1 and Ammonium Sulphate).

Sujay Ojha, who runs an agri consultancy firm in Anand, Gujarat, said, "There are some problems with the testing methods when it comes to small dairy farms located in villages. But the rest of the sector is adhering to the stringent rules and standards."

After testing, the findings were presented as compliant and non-compliant, which were further divided as sub-standard without any safety issues and with safety issues. N Bhaskar, head of Quality Assurance (QA), FSSAI, said, "Even though, 48.9 per cent samples were found as non-compliant, but only 9.9 per cent of them were inconsumable. The rest 39 per cent were within the tolerance limit."

This report has only looked at liquid milk samples and does not include milk products. "Processed milk samples had a bigger share in the number of non-complaint samples as compared to the raw ones. This survey must make private industries adhere to the standards," Aggarwal adds.

The samples have also been geo-tagged as few parameters can be impacted by the environment and the breed itself. They have also photo documented the samples to ensure traceability as this is only an interim report and the final report will be released soon.