

FSSAI milk study shows contaminants a key concern, mgmt must begin early in value-chain

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E-Paper

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI's) national survey to test for adulteration and contamination in milk has thrown up some significant findings. Of the 6,432 samples collected last year between May and October from 1,100 cities, 93% were found to be safe for consumption. The samples were tested for 13 adulterants and three contaminants (antibiotics, aflatoxin M1, and pesticides).

The FSSAI had noted that contamination was a bigger problem than adulteration when consuming milk—processed or raw. The survey found antibiotics above the prescribed norms in 77 samples. But, the biggest concern has been the presence of aflatoxin M1 in some samples.



Aflatoxin M1 is a deadly carcinogen whose consumption—of about one mg/kg or higher—can lead to aflatoxicosis, eventually causing death. The survey noted that out of the 6,432 samples, 368 (5.7%) had aflatoxin beyond the permissible limits. The highest concentration of aflatoxin was found in samples from Delhi, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. FSSAI notes that the presence of aflatoxin can be attributed

to the cattle-feed and fodder. Aflatoxins are produced by certain fungi present in crops like maize, cotton seeds, etc. Improper storage, in humid and warm conditions, lead to the creation of aflatoxin in the harvest, which then passes on from the fodder to cattle, and from cattle to milk. Given milk is a staple for children, the regulatory framework must ensure that contamination from toxic cattle feed is prevented.

Farmers and warehouse personnel need to be trained in safe storage practices. The problem of contaminants is compounded given their presence in milk products is yet to be studied. The government also needs to crack down on antibiotic abuse in agriculture to ensure that antibiotics levels don't shoot up in milk and other food.

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