

## **From January 1, all dairy plants must have quality testing units**

The self-monitoring unit of the plants should maintain record of the sample tests of the milk.

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Image used for representational purpose only

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Chennai: The Food Safety Standards Authority of India has ordered milk companies to set up a systematic milk sample testing system in their dairy plants. The move comes after a recent survey revealed the presence of carcinogen and other toxic substances in samples taken from various states including Tamil Nadu.

The regulator has fixed January 1, 2020, as the deadline for milk companies to establish a self monitoring system. They are also expected to maintain a record of milk samples tested. The record will be checked by food safety officials. The measures are being taken with the objective of ensuring quality of milk and milk products, said a recent order issued by FSSAI.

A total of 32 parameters have to be checked, including for chemicals, adulterants, and microbiological contaminants. For certain parameters, tests must be conducted in every

milk tank in the processing unit. Tests for the presence of pesticides and chemicals must be conducted once in every 2-3 months.

The tests results, of both raw and processed milk, must be recorded and maintained for at least a year. "In case any non compliance found in the milk samples, it should be reprocessed and again tests should be repeated. If any non compliance on certain parameters due to presence of residues, adulterants or other contamination, the entire batch of milk should be rejected," said the directive.

FSSAI is also planning to launch a scheme to certify milk vendors as 'verified'. The verified tag would be given for dairy farmers who maintain hygiene. Vendors who sell milk in loose will be covered under this programme.

"Farmers can voluntarily register through the portal, and would be provided photo identity card and properly calibrated lactometer. Training would be imparted on clean milk practices with periodic sampling and testing of their milk. A dedicated portal will be created," said an official quoting the directive from issued by FSSAI.

The scheme will be implemented by food safety officials, along with animal husbandry department and Aavin.

A Gnanasekaran, Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Service, said, "The department already engaged in creating awareness among the dairy farmers on the best practices to be followed in cattle feeding and vaccination. We are awaiting for detailed guidelines for implementing the scheme."