

FSSAI removes ammonium sulphate from milk adulterants under Testing Scheme

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FSSAI has removed ammonium sulphate from the list of adulterants, for which dairy plants were asked to conduct checks under the Scheme of Testing and Inspection.

The country's apex food regulator, in this regard, issued a notice containing a revised list of adulterants to be tested under the said scheme, which has to be followed by dairy processing plants for monitoring of internal controls to ensure safe and good quality supply of milk and milk products to consumers.

The scheme was launched in October 2019, after the release of National Milk Survey.

A senior official with FSSAI said, "After a careful review of scientific opinion, the scientific group reached to a conclusion that ammonium sulphate may also come into the milk naturally, and may not be considered as a contaminant as earlier thought. It was noted that ammonium sulphate is allowed as an additive in certain foods in several countries."

"Before releasing National Milk Safety and Quality Survey 2018, a meeting of stakeholders was held on September 9, 2019. This group of stakeholders was of the view that while incidents of adulteration cannot be ruled out, but these are restricted to few areas and in times when there is large demand-supply gap," he added.

"Such incidents can only be tackled by having strict vigil in such areas. The stakeholders' group further deliberated on presence of ammonium sulphate in milk," the official stated.

Overall, the dairy plants need to test for nine physical, chemical/compositional parameters, 12 adulterants, four chemical contaminants and four microbiological contaminants, besides testing for water supply as per IS 10500.

Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs, said, "Ammonium sulphate in milk is natural and is deemed safe by FSSAI after considering scientific opinion. It is also used as an additive in certain food in several countries."

He, however, pointed out that as the recent reports on the surging rate of adulteration in milk had disturbed the government as well as the dairy industry, the use of artificial ammonium sulphate was a worrying factor. It was used in order to increase the

lactometer reading of milk and to decrease its lactose content.

According to FSSAI, the scheme for sampling, testing, and inspection for dairy processing plants was introduced to strengthen the internal controls through self monitoring and has to be implemented at all the dairy processing establishment and was in implementation from January 1, 2020.

The scheme stipulated the sampling points, test methods, frequency of sampling and permissible limit as per food safety regulations and called for a well-equipped in-house laboratory for testing microbiological and other chemical parameters, and testing shall be carried out by qualified and trained personnel.