

Simplification of regulatory regime key priority towards food safety: Singhal

Friday, 30 July, 2021

Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi

Arun Singhal, CEO, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), has opined that simplification of the regulatory regime was a key priority for FSSAI towards strengthening the food safety ecosystem using technological tools.

He has said that technology driven tools would play a key role in strengthening the food safety ecosystem in the country. He suggested that industry and academic institutions need to collaborate to strengthen the food safety ecosystem while speaking at the inaugural session of the 16th edition of CII's Food Safety Quality and Regulatory Summit held in partnership with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) here.

Speaking on the need for strengthening the food safety ecosystem at the state level, Singhal highlighted that technical as well as financial assistance was being extended to states by FSSAI towards creating necessary infrastructure, mobilising resources to carry out manual special camps inspections, awareness drives and skill development. Additionally, there was a special focus on building microbiological testing capabilities across the states.

He mentioned that FSSAI was increasingly focussing on periodic risk-based inspections, third-party inspections as well as increased surveillance. Further, FSSAI has introduced a scheme for approving rapid analytical food testing (RAFT) devices/kits/methods and so far, 65 such kits have been approved by FSSAI.

Singhal added that the 'Eat Right India' campaign was focussed towards building a shared culture for food safety and wholesome nutrition.

"Under the initiative, FSSAI is mainstreaming various subject matters like fortification, limiting trans fats, limiting HFSS (High Fat, Salt and Sugar), for better nutritional outcomes. Several benchmarking and certification programmes are in place to build capacities of food businesses in both organised and unorganised sectors like street food markets, local dhabas, petty food vendors, local mandis etc. to strengthen the food safety ecosystem," he stated, while adding that the focus was on the importance of training, and over 5 lakh food safety supervisors have been trained under the FoSTaC programme and around 3 lakh food safety supervisors were trained for safety and hygiene practices during Covid-19.

Singhal referred to the works by CII towards spearheading industry engagement on the initiative under its 'Product Reformulation' and 'Eat Right Pledge' and remarked that CII resource centres like CHIFSS, CeSRAC and ReCHAN were playing an important role in steering industry engagement around food safety and CII should also continue to scale its efforts to hand hold MSME on food safety and hygiene.

Present on the occasion, Frank Yiannas, deputy commissioner for food policy and response, US Food & Drug Administration, highlighted that the future food safety framework would encompass tech-enabled traceability; smarter tools and approaches for prevention and outbreak responses; business model innovations and retail modernisation; as well as a food safety culture as a shared responsibility.

Also present on the occasion, were Ms Hikuepi (Epi) Katjiuongua, PhD, Senior Agriculture Economist, Food and Agriculture Global Practice, World Bank Group; Deepak Iyer, co-chairman, CII National Committee on FMCG & President, India Business Unit, Mondelez International; and Mayank Jalan, co-chairman, CII National Committee on Food Processing and Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying & Managing Director, Keventer Agro Limited.

The experts stated that there was a need for 'One Health Approach' towards attaining Sustainable Development Goals, with the interlinkages within the food system and the relevance of integrated solutions to reduce risk and improve response through coordinated interventions in multiple sectors, particularly frameworks like Eat Right India created by FSSAI to mitigate food safety risks comprehensively across stakeholders and food sectors along with Midday Meals, Street Food Vendors, Anganwadis, Railways Base Kitchen, Schools, and others.

The summit focusses on the theme of 'Powering Food Safety, Quality and Regulatory Programs with Next Generation Tools, Techniques and Technology'. It is spread over five days and has a line-up of 35 plus globally renowned speakers discussing global best practices around Next Generation Food Safety Technology, Tools and Techniques; Plastic Waste Management; Rapid Testing to Support Real time Action and surveillance efforts; Addressing Scientific Gaps in Setting MRLs.