

TLabs to monitor quality of brew

Quality has become one of the main driving forces for domestic and export-oriented tea trade

[Our Special Correspondent](#) in Guwahati

An employee works in TLabs in Calcutta. The Telegraph picture

The tea industry now has a Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)-accredited laboratory, which will help get teas compliant for sale in the country and abroad.

TLabs, a chain of labs under the Tea Research Association (TRA) in Calcutta, is a pesticide-residue laboratory, which has been recently notified by FSSAI.

“The FSSAI recognition has given a big boost to TLabs to do more in quality movement in coming days,” TRA secretary Joydeep Phukan told The Telegraph.

He said the TLabs are being regularly used by the industry and many merchant exporters to test their samples meant for exports before bidding for their teas in the auctions.

The lab in Calcutta has been instrumental in monitoring tea quality since its inception from 2010-11. The basic job of the lab is pesticide-residue testing and testing of quality parameters and to ensure compliance of teas for sale within India and overseas.

He said quality has become one of the main driving forces for domestic and export-oriented tea trade.

“FSSAI has also set the quality standards for different Indian tea (black, green and Kangra) with regard to fitness for human consumption. It has also time to time modified and updated the different parameters in respect to quality which will be suitable for Indian consumers as well as to facilitate smooth tea trade,” he said.

Various quality parameters, including checking of pesticide residues, presence of heavy metals, natural toxic substances and iron fillings, are being currently monitored under FSSAI. The laboratory has also been participating in proficiency testing programmes organised by Food Analysis Performance Assessment Scheme (FAPAS) of Food and Environmental Research Agency (FERA, York, UK) each year with satisfactory result.

TLabs has imparted its responsibility successfully in Tea Board-initiated quality check movement called Tea Council programme. The lab has also been monitoring the samples of tea from the Northeast in regard to PPC (plant protection code) adherence.