

Tea Board goes for food safety push to uplift quality

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Kolkata: The Tea Board of India has issued a circular, directing all tea manufacturing units in the country “to strictly comply with the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) norms and get their end product tested in any NABL-accredited lab” to ensure that the quality of brew sold in India and exported abroad is never compromised. The Tea Board circular adds: “The test reports should also be submitted to the Board’s zonal office for our information...however, all manufacturing units (both estate factories and bought-leaf factories) are hereby informed that Tea Board Quality Control Laboratory has received NABL accreditation...”

A top Tea Board official reasoned that the circular is needed owing to the continuous revision of the FSSAI Act, 2006, and its amendments in 2018. “As more chemicals and new parameters have been included under the FSSAI Act, our duty was to inform and educate the existing as well as new players in the tea production business,” added the Board official. The FSSAI test for the tea sector includes pesticide residue and heavy metal analysis.

Though small tea growers, who are always criticized for low quality control of their produce, do not come under the purview of FSSAI as primary producers.

The small tea growers’ (STG) body, Cista, welcomed the latest Tea Board circular for compulsory testing of tea for twice a year. Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, president, Cista, said: “STGs should also strictly follow FSSAI and Plant Protection Code (PPC). We have to ensure our customers that we are producing clean, pure and environment-friendly tea. We have already requested Tea Board to reach out to everybody for training-cum-awareness campaign at the grassroot level.”

The Indian Tea Association (ITA), the premier tea producers’ body, claimed that all its member-producers have always complied with FSSAI testing norms. “However, the Tea Board’s initiative is commendable as it would make the buyers more confident about Indian tea.”

The Tea Board is also organizing a ‘Young Entrepreneurs’ Meet’ for drawing a future roadmap for the morning beverage on April 24. The meet will discuss the steps “needed to be taken to bring quality produce to the market and discouraging the rampant production, sales, export and marketing of low quality tea.