

FSSAI trains food businesses to mitigate Covid-19 risk

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Food businesses can visit www.fostac.fssai.gov.in to enrol in the certification programme. (Representative image) (AFP)

Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched an online training programme to address the challenges in ensuring uninterrupted supply of food while containing the risk of contracting SARS-COV-2, which causes coronavirus disease (Covid-19), for workers, customers and all those involved in the chain.

“Covid-19 is posing a serious challenge for food supply chains worldwide ... Keeping these issues in mind, FSSAI had issued detailed guidelines for food businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic ... In a bid to enable and equip food businesses to function and reduce the risk of contagion, the FSSAI has launched a training programme for food businesses...,” the food regulator said in a statement.

The online training programme is launched under FSSAI's flagship operation, Food Safety Training and Certification Programme (FoSTaC), through its various empanelled training partners. Food businesses can visit www.fostac.fssai.gov.in to enrol in the certification programme.

"The training programme caters to all stakeholders in the food ecosystem comprising manufacturers, packers, transporters, retailers, and food delivery partners and aggregators. The agencies/non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving food in places, including community kitchens, should also get their food handlers trained for Covid-19 precautionary measures. A certificate of participation shall be issued to the trainees through the FoSTaC portal," the FSSAI said. The training programme seeks to emphasise on food hygiene and sanitation to prevent the spread of the viral outbreak.

"Practising social distancing by the staff is of utmost importance. It's the responsibility of the employer to ensure the norms are properly followed. The module that FSSAI has created is pretty exhaustive and will help in putting in place infection control practices among food businesses," said a senior official in the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, requesting anonymity.

FSSAI guidelines, which were issued earlier, advocated for mandatory use of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits such as masks, gloves, and headgear.

It was suggested that a local emergency response team must be established in large food businesses to deal with suspected Covid-19 cases, and a person should be designated as the coordinator.

"Proper hygienic practices such as the washing of hands, frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser, cleaning, disinfection, and avoid close contact with a sick person need to be followed. Besides, wearing personal jewellery and watch should be discouraged along with the use of mobile phones at workplaces," the guidelines had suggested.