



Kerala: Transfat level high in Vanaspati

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Jul 11, 2019

Lack of lab facilities hinders food safety.



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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala has been declared as the model state in terms of the efforts taken to eliminate transfat consumption by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) however, the food safety authorities here are unable to collect statutory samples or take action because of the lack of lab facilities.

The surveillance samples of vanaspati/margarine- widely used by eateries and bakeries for preparation of proprietary items especially sweets and deep fried food – collected by the food safety authorities from the open market has high transfat levels. Around 11 out of the 44 samples collected from the market has exceeded transfat limits.

An official said that the level of transfat was high in some of the surveillance samples. “There are not many manufacturers in the state. It is learnt that there are only 130 manufacturers across the nation producing vanaspati or margarine. In some of the samples, the transfat level was 7 or 8. We have to equip our labs to check statutory samples,” said the official.

The official said that 90 percent of the vanaspati is coming from other states. "We cannot take action as we don't have the equipment to check the level of transfat in the mobile lab at check posts," the official added.

As part of its effort to eliminate trans-fat consumption in the state, the commissionerate has constituted a special committee comprising of food safety officers, representatives from the World Health Organisation (WHO), World Bank and Vital Strategies, a global public health organisation.

The committee will frame guidelines and help implement the revised standards of percentage of transfat in edible oil, ghee, vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortening by less than 2 % in the state.

It is learnt that many European countries have set the maximum limit for TFA at two percent of the total fat content in oils and fats.

The current permitted level of trans fat is 5 percent in India. The WHO (World Health Organisation) has urged governments across the world to eliminate the use of trans fats from global food supplies by 2023.