

FSSAI Develops First State Food Safety Index to Measure States' Performance on Five Parameters of Food Safety

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The first-ever World Food Safety Day, declared by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018, was kicked-off by Hon'ble Union Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Minister of State, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) by recognizing the remarkable efforts of States, Food Businesses and individuals in promoting food safety. The theme for this day was 'Food Safety, everyone's business'. Since food touches the lives of everyone, everywhere, a wide cross section of stakeholders ranging from professionals to Government food safety officials, Development Partners, food business operators gathered together to collectively take a pledge to promote food safety for all 130- crore citizens of the country.

The Prime Minister, in his message recognized that "Food safety is of prime importance for the well-being and health of our nation as well as its people, particularly women and children. The Government is focused on implementing the latest and best standards of food safety in the country."

In an effort to galvanize states to work towards ensuring safe food for citizens, FSSAI has developed the first State Food Safety Index (SFSI) to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety. The Hon'ble Union Minister felicitated seven leading States/UTs based on the ranking for the year 2018-2019 for their impressive performance. These were Chandigarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The categories included Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements, Compliance, Food Testing- Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training and Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment. States such as Bihar, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh followed close behind.

Following the certification of several 'Clean Street Food Hubs' in several cities based on third-party audits and training of street food vendors, now Golden Temple Street, Amritsar has been also recognized as a 'Clean Street Food Hub'.

To recognize efforts at the community level to promote food safety, FSSAI has also declared seven campuses such as those of universities, schools, colleges/institutes, workplaces, defence/paramilitary establishments, hospitals and jails as 'Eat Right Campus'. Based on a five star-rating by compliance to a set of well-defined benchmarks on food safety and hygiene, food waste management, healthy diets, promotion of local/seasonal food and awareness generation, the following campuses were recognized for their exemplary standards-IIT Gandhinagar, IIT Roorkee, LBSNAA, Mussourie, Unilever and Wipro, Bengaluru, HCL Noida and Genpact, Gurugram.



FSSAI has instituted the 'Eat Right Awards' to recognize the contribution of food companies and individuals to empower citizens to choose safe and healthy food options, which would help improve their health and well-being. The Expert Selection Committee, shortlisted 13 awards out of a total of 123 applications in five categories, namely, Food Products, Food Services, Organized Retail, Innovative Solutions, Safe Food including Testing, and Community outreach and Engagement. Out of a total of 83 applications, 14 awards were given for individual contribution made by young chefs, professionals and media influencers.

An innovative solution to take food safety to schools, called the 'Food Safety Magic Box' was launched. This do-it-yourself food testing kit comprises a manual and equipment to check for food adulterants, which schoolchildren can use in their classroom laboratories. This kit is also useful for frontline health workers. Twenty kits were distributed to Primary Health Centres and Government schools in Delhi with the support of the Delhi Food Safety Department.

Another new-age, hand-held battery operated device called 'Raman 1.0' from Oak Analytics, India was also launched. This device performs rapid detection (in less than 1 minute) of economically driven adulteration in edible oils, fats and ghee. The equipment tests more than 250 samples per battery charge, collects and stores data on the cloud using a smart device. This is the first of 19 such equipment and methods that have been provisionally approved by FSSAI for strengthening the food testing infrastructure in the country.

To commemorate 150 years of the Mahatma's 150th birth anniversary, FSSAI had launched the 'Swasth Bharat Yatra' on 16th October 2018, World Food Day to spread the message of 'Eat Right India'. This pan-India cyclothon, the world's largest for a public health cause,

culminated in New Delhi on 27th January 2019. In over 100 days, more than 21,000 volunteer cyclists and 10 lakh participants covered over 20,000 kms, reached over 2100 places and touched the lives of 2.5 crore people, creating awareness on safe & healthy diets.

A commemorative volume to capture the journey and impact of this yatra was also released by the Hon'ble Minister as a tribute to all the stakeholders who contributed to make this movement a huge success. Further, the promo of a 10-part series on the yatra, shot as a food travelogue showcasing key messages of the 'Eat Right India' movement was also released. This series is being telecast on Living Foodz Channel every Saturday and Sunday at 9:30 pm since May 25th and is being telecast from 1st June onwards on Zee Business Channel, at 5:30pm every weekend.

Gandhiji was the inspiration for the Swasth Bharat Yatra thanks to his non-violent 'Satyagraha' to mobilise people for a common goal. His philosophy on food and health is relevant even today. He advocated a simple, whole-foods, plant-based diet, regular fasting and physical exercise for health benefits. To symbolize the ongoing journey towards good health, a statue of 'Gandhiji on a Bicycle', the first of its kind, was also unveiled by the Hon'ble Ministers.

A unique endeavour to mobilize people across the country for safe and healthy food by leveraging the local network and chapters of professional associations such as IDA, NSI, IMA etc., called Network of Professionals in Food and Nutrition (NetProFaN) has been created. A manifesto for NetProFaN was released, encompassing the vision, key objectives, thematic areas of action, activities to be carried out at the ground level and guidelines for functioning.

The manifesto also outlines a matrix for earning points to get recognition for efforts at the chapter and individual levels. To support these efforts as well as to make knowledge on safe and healthy diets accessible to people at large, FSSAI's online Web-resource Library was also launched. This library hosts informative and interesting videos on topics such as food adulteration, eating a balanced diet, fortified foods etc. This can be accessed at www.fssai.gov.in/videolibrary.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest, Hon'ble Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remarked, *"I appeal to all people to adopt Gandhiji's messages of eating less, safe, healthy, simply, locally and sustainably by reducing food waste and sharing surplus food. I request you all to take this pledge in your own local communities to take this message forward. While FSSAI has done great work, it needs to be used optimally and turned into a Jan Andolan. If we can get India to vote, we can get India to Eat Right."*

Hon'ble Minister of State, Shri Ashwani Kumar Choubey congratulated FSSAI and quoted scriptures, *"Clean food will result in a clean body, mind and thoughts and deeds. For this people's awareness about safe and healthy food and participation is critical to make an impact on society."*

The Secretary, Health, Mrs. Preeti Sudan, congratulating FSSAI on accomplishing so much with limited resources and manpower, said *"The online resource material, training modules and Eat Right Toolkit have actualized my vision to enable our ASHAs and Anganwadi Workers, the generals in the field to take the message of safe and healthy diets to each and every family at the village level."*

The Chairperson, FSSAI, commented, *"The real tribute to the Mahatma lies in ensuring that safe food becomes the right of every individual and not a privilege of a few."*

The CEO, FSSAI pointed out, “FSSAI is a very different kind of organization compared to food regulators across the world. First, we have brought food safety and nutrition together in the national health agenda. Second, we focus on consumer empowerment. Third, we work through partnerships and convergence.”

Thus, with a series of useful resources and initiatives for people and incentivizing safe food practices through multiple recognition systems at the state, city, community, organizational and individual levels, FSSAI has raised the bar for food safety in the country and strives to achieve more as we progress further.