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Draft regulation for safe, wholesome, nutritious food for school children to be put in place

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MANGALURU: The initiatives taken by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in the school space from point of view of inculcating right eating habits have not reached national scale so far, its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Agarwal said at an ASSOCHAM event in New Delhi.

"There has been good participation from Delhi schools, Tamil Nadu officers were taking interest, so it saw a good participation but it is not really a pan-India phenomenon," said Agarwal inaugurating an ASSOCHAM National Symposium on School Healthcare.

Recalling meeting of health minister with FSSAI officials on the occasion of World Food Safety Day to get a sense of what the organisation has been doing in the space of promoting healthy eating habits, Agarwal said, "He was quite impressed but obviously he also realised that these initiatives, however are extremely thoughtful but the challenge is to make it a truly mass movement."

It will not become a mass movement unless we integrate food in our school systems, he said. "Not merely confining to health and wellness ambassadors and coordinators, it has to be the whole of school which has to be involved in this exercise of getting the school children to eat the right stuff," he added.

Seeking cooperation of education industry he added that there is lot more that needs to be done. "We are still in some sense in mode of consolidation to bring all these elements together and see how we can move forward and take up a national movement around eat right in the schools.

Agarwal also said that FSSAI has come out with draft regulations on healthy diets for school

children which will also be in place. "About three years a High Court had asked us to come out with regulations on healthy diets for school children, and we have been struggling to put that regulation together because if we make a law it has to be implemented."

He added, "How do you define 'healthy diets,' that is at the heart of that regulation, we had to have a metrics that defines healthy foods, fairly objectively, now we have come out with draft regulations and that will also be put in place."

Agarwal also informed that in the draft regulation for safe, wholesome and nutritious food for school children, FSSAI has proposed to impose curbs on advertising, promotion and endorsement of food products that are not healthy in school premises and within 50-meter radius of school, while earlier it was only about availability in school canteens.