

Global Food Regulators Summit 2023 paves way for robust food safety

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The first-ever Global Food Regulators Summit (GFRS) 2023 in the national capital has paved the way for a more robust food safety and regulatory ecosystem, according to an official release.

This groundbreaking initiative has garnered global acclaim for its potential to transform and strengthen the world's food safety systems. The discussion and outcomes of the sessions have laid a strong foundation for collective action in tackling regulatory challenges and ensuring the well-being of consumers worldwide, the statement added.

The first technical session of the summit focused on food regulatory systems in different countries, key strategies adopted by food regulators to mitigate various risks associated with foods, challenges faced by the regulators globally and the exchange of perspectives on strengthening food safety systems across the food value chain through a cohesive approach.

VK Paul, member, NITI Aayog, delivered the special address during the opening session, deliberating on the importance of a national regulatory framework for an effective food safety control system.

“Harmonized global regulator regimes can play a crucial role in setting and enforcing standards & regulations to protect consumer health, promote fair trade practices and maintain public trust in the global food control system,” Paul said.

Raj Rajasekhar, vice chairperson, Codex Alimentarius Commission; and Rajesh Kumar Singh (IAS), secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade Industry, addressed the

participants and emphasized on the need for providing an enabling environment for the food industry, having simpler regulations and decriminalisation of minor offences, without compromising on the food safety.

Professor Susan Jebb, chair, Food Standards Agency, UK and Isabelle Laberge, senior director and chief food safety officer, Canada shared their insights on innovations in standards setting and quality assurance and role of modern food regulations in creating a balance between innovations and food safety.

Minister for food safety, New Zealand, Rachel Broking, addressed the participants virtually, laying a greater emphasis on food safety across the globe. S Gopalakrishnan, special secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, presented the regulatory system being followed by FSSAI which set a platform for the panel discussions.

The opening session was followed by a panel discussion on 'Global Regulatory Framework', with panelists from eight different countries, including Brazil, Bhutan, Chile, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Mozambique, US and New Zealand. During this session, moderated by Shri Sanjeev Chopra, secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, shared their experiences and successful initiatives from different countries, inspiring others to adopt similar approaches.

The concluding day of the GFRS 2023 began with a plenary session addressed by Dr Chris Kebbel, chief food safety officer, New Zealand Food Safety.

Dr Kebbel emphasised on food safety as an important element in building consumer trust and confidence.

Setting the context, Anita Praveen, secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), said anything and everything which comes in contact with food should be safe. She highlighted the importance of framing science-based standards while adding that the periodic review of standards is equally important.

In his special address, Rajesh Kotecha, secretary, Ministry of Ayush, shared his insights on the use of botanicals as traditional medicines. He also stated that botanicals are already in high demand, with consumers incorporating them in traditional preparations.

He emphasised the need for having strong regulation in this area.

The Global Food Regulators Summit, inaugurated on July 20 by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya brought together food regulators from around the world to exchange perspectives and knowledge on crucial issues related to food safety systems.

Various initiatives including Food-o-Copoeia, a collection of food category-wise monographs and a single point reference for all applicable standards for a specific product; 'SaNGRAH' – Safe food for Nations: Global food Regulatory Authorities Handbook and a Common Digital Dashboard were launched during the inauguration ceremony. (ANI).

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