



# CHAPTER 8

## Food Safety Surveillance

## 1. Introduction

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Food Safety Surveillance is a system that collects the data regarding all types of contaminants in foods. It has to be conducted in a structured and planned manner with the purpose to understand the spectrum of food safety, timely identification of food safety hazards and then provide relevant data for food safety monitoring, risk assessment and standards setting.

Under Section 29 (3) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, “the Food Authority shall maintain a system of control and other activities as appropriate to the circumstances, including public communication on food safety and risk, food safety surveillance and other monitoring activities covering all stages of food business”.

In line with the provisions in the Act, FSSAI has prepared a general surveillance plan (Annexure) which is being issued to States and UTs to conduct regular surveillance activities in time bound manner. It is the duty of the Food Safety Officer to conduct surveillance activities both at the retail and wholesale level (at all stages of production, processing and distribution) to ensure the safety of foods.

## 2. Objectives of Surveillance

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- (a) search, collect, collate, analyse and summarise relevant scientific and technical data particularly relating to –
  - (i) food consumption and the exposure of individuals to risks related to the consumption of food
  - (ii) incidence and prevalence of biological risk
  - (iii) contaminants in food
  - (iv) residues of various contaminants
  - (v) identification of emerging risks
- (b) Promote, co-ordinate and issue guidelines for the development of risk assessment methodologies, monitor, conduct and forward messages on the food safety risks of food to State Governments and Commissioners of Food Safety.
- (c) Provide scientific and technical advice and assistance to the State Governments in implementation of risk management procedures with regard to food safety and to draw up a general surveillance plan for food safety management and work in close co-operation with the Central Government.

## 3. Types of Surveillance

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### (a) Active Surveillance

A system employing staff members to regularly contact health care providers/ manufacturing units to seek information about quality of food items procured, consumed and the different ingredients used in the manufacturing unit and the testing parameters involved. Active surveillance provides the most accurate and timely information. It has following components:-

- (i) General surveillance activity.
- (ii) State specific surveillance
- (iii) Seasonal surveillance

- (iv) Special drives or surveillance during festivals
- (v) Surveillance in case of any risk associated with food
- (vi) Commodity specific
- (vii) Direct and ensure all States/UT establish surveillance division at Food safety commissioner's office
- (viii) Network with Food testing laboratories and surveillance division of all States/UTs
- (ix) Based on analysis of the enforcement activities and evolving market trends, provide inputs to Surveillance team for Active Surveillance measures

### **(b) Passive Surveillance**

- (i) A system by which a regulatory authority receives reports submitted from manufacturing units or any other sources. Passive surveillance is a relatively inexpensive strategy to cover large areas, and it provides critical information for monitoring a community's health. It has following components:-
- (ii) Collect and collate data on food consumption, incidence and prevalence of biological risk, contaminants in food, residues of contaminants in food through a Risk management framework and introduction of Rapid Alert System in States and UTs.

## **4. Requirements for an Effective Surveillance and Monitoring**

- (a) The object of food safety surveillance system is to ensure that the food supplied in the market is safe. In the absence of an effective surveillance system, the consumer can be exposed to physical, chemical and microbiological contaminants, causing a variety of food borne diseases caused by agents such as Mould, Yeast, E. coli, Coliform, Salmonella, Staphylococcus Aureus, Vibro Cholera, etc., and chemical contaminants like pesticide residues, heavy metals, aflatoxins, etc. In the absence of requisite data, it is not possible to assess the present state and magnitude of the problem.
- (b) A number of decisions of the Food Authority will require information and data. These decisions have to be taken with the help of MIS databases of lab reports hazards in foods, testing of food for chemical and biological agents. Monitoring and surveillance data allows identification of potential area of focus to be listed for subsequent action by the Food Authority and the evaluation of the effectiveness of sanitary measures that have been implemented in all food safety frameworks.
- (c) The reports received through surveillance activities shall be compiled and if any surveillance sample fails due to any non-conformity then enforcement sampling may be executed and prosecution may be launched.

**Note – Suggestive Annual Surveillance Plan is at Annexure-III.**