

“The MoU with CSIR is just the first step towards encouraging digital nutrition”



Arun Singhal,
Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), New Delhi

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) aiming towards collaborative research and information dissemination in the area of food and nutrition. NuFFooDS Spectrum reached out to Arun Singhal, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI, New Delhi to find out more this collaboration.

Edited excerpts;

What are the key objectives of the recent MoU signed with CSIR?

The key objectives are to identify technologies and programmes that focus on food safety and nutrition, and to share the expertise of various institutions associated with CSIR in developing internationally acceptable regulatory framework for the food safety ecosystem in our country. We also intend to utilize the pool of available technologies with CSIR for select innovations of national importance; to strengthen the laboratory network across the country for a robust and more reliable food testing and reporting system; to conduct joint research and surveillance activities; and to build capacities of people involved in food businesses and formulation of regulations.

How can you ensure this will help in more scientific studies on food in India?

CSIR is one of the oldest, credible and reputed scientific organizations, not only in India but at the global level as well. With FSSAI's mandate to develop science based standards and ensure safe and wholesome food for the consumers, collaborating with CSIR would result in smooth adaptation of innovative technologies and methods developed by the premier institutions under them. Besides, the technological capability (both in

terms of manpower as well as instrumentation) of CSIR institutions can be synergistically used for setting science based standards as well as evaluating the impact of any regulatory policies made. Overall, the collaboration tends to utilize the abundant scientific resources of CSIR for better implementation of regulatory framework by FSSAI.

Do you feel food & nutrition challenges in India can be solved with more research? How?

Many of the food and nutrition related challenges in India can be resolved with more holistic and collaborative research by premier institutions using local resources. The results of such R&D would not only address the challenge being faced, but also strengthen the food safety landscape in the country. Further, sufficient research in various fields related to food & nutrition would also help industries in identifying and harnessing innovative methods and techniques of production which will lead to creation of healthier food products and reduce the carbon footprint in manufacturing process. For example, a detailed research on the nutritional profiling in various products can help companies reformulate their products with less amount of fats, salt and sugar.

How do you foresee the concept of digital nutrition in the coming years?

Although the concept of digital nutrition is yet to take off in a big way, it appears to be the way in the years to come. This is mainly because with unprecedented situations like COVID-19 pandemic, the focus would be more on providing safe, authentic and nutritionally balanced diet to consumers with far less contact and reduced human intervention. Nutrition being very specific to individual physiology, potential of the digital nutrition to make an indelible mark can be high, provided digital health initiatives get integrated with the nutritional requirements of people. One of the main focus of the MoU with CSIR is to ensure building a digital database of nutritional requirements and the resources that can fulfill those nutritional needs. However, a lot needs to be done collaboratively by various scientific institutions, food industries, policy makers and regulators. The MoU with CSIR is just the first step in creating such a mechanism or platform for encouraging digital nutrition. **NS**

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