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FSSAI announces initiatives to promote safe food culture

Aiming to create a culture of food safety in the country, regulator FSSAI today announced a host of initiatives to promote safe food at homes, schools, offices, eateries and religious places, besides a national survey for assessing milk quality.

Commemorating the 10th anniversary of enactment of Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, the FSSAI said it will launch ten new initiatives that seek to connect people of all age groups for ensuring safe food through an integrated approach.

"This bouquet of 10 initiatives focused on safe and nutritious food at home, school, workplace, religious places, in trains and railway stations, in restaurants and other places," Health Ministry said in a statement.

FSSAI will provide a green book to every household and create a dedicated website for safe and nutritious food at home.

Similarly for schools, it will prepare a negative list of high fat, sugar and salt foods (commonly referred as junk food), seeking to ensure food safety and nutrition in and around schools, including lunch box and canteens.

It plans to make licence from FSSAI compulsory for food businesses involved in mid-day meal scheme.

For offices, FSSAI said the canteens and cafeterias should be registered/licenced with the food regulator. The establishment should also ensure monthly testing of kitchens, water and equipment.

As far as religious places are concerned, FSSAI said it is engaging with the

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management of places of worships to help them implement the Food Safety Management System (FSMS).

Siddhivinayak temple in Mumbai has already adopted FSMS, while Saibaba temple in Shirdi is in the process of doing so for their kitchens.

Noting that food safety is an important health and economic issue, Health Minister J P Nadda said, "Provisions of safe food should become a part of ingrained culture in our country."

He said the adoption of global food safety standards would boost exports of agro-products and also provide better returns to farmers for their produce.

Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Pawan Agarwal said all these 10 initiatives have been developed collaboratively over the past few months along with other stakeholders and partners.

"States would be facilitated to implement them on pilot basis over the next few months and thereafter national roll out of these initiatives would be done possibly by next year," Agarwal said.

Apart from these initiatives, FSSAI also announced plans to conduct national milk quality survey and frame standards for food fortification, organic food. It will also simplify the registration and licencing regulations.

FSSAI will also take steps to bridge standards divide from farm to trade and to rediscover the rich culinary heritage of India.

It also launched food safety display board that would help connect consumers directly with food safety officers. Twelve corporates including Mother Dairy, Haldiram, StarBucks, BurgerKing, among others, have already volunteered to display this board at their 1,300 outlets.

Addressing a FSSAI conference late last evening, Health Minister J P Nadda had said the Centre will support the state governments in capacity building and setting up high quality labs for proper enforcement of food safety standards.

"We are all for capacity building not only at the national level...We are working

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"We are working to have high quality labs. We are working to support states (in setting up) high quality laboratories," Nadda said.

The government will finetune the food safety standards to make it more meaningful, Nadda said. "It is (fine tuning) a continuous process. We will be doing it," the Minister said.

He emphasised on more awareness programmes to promote safe food at home, schools, offices and eateries.

Nadda said the food standards act is a paradigm shift from regulatory regime under the provisions of Food Adulteration Act to self-regulatory and facilitatory regime.

"Now, basic groundwork is done. We are ready for a big leap forward," Nadda said.

The minister emphasised upon two-way communication between the food businesses and the regulator. He advised that the authority should be fully aware of the need and concerns of small food businesses as well in its work of standard formulation and compliance.

FSSAI Chairperson Ashish Bahuguna said, "We have completed 10 formative years of this act and are now striving to work towards a collective approach for building safe food culture in India because food safety cannot be ensured by enforcement alone".
