

**Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of FSSAI held on 8th November, 2010
at 1100 Hrs at its Headquarter at FDA Bhawan, New Delhi.**

Shri P. I. Suvrathan, Chairperson extended a warm welcome to all the members to the sixth meeting of the Food Authority. List of participants who attended the meeting is at Annexure-I. Leave of absence was granted to Smt. Upma Chaudhry, Shri Sanjay Singh, Dr. U. Venkateswarulu, Shri Arun Panda, Ms. Mona Malhotra Chopra, Ms. Vasundhara Pramod Deodhar, Dr. S. Girija, Dr. N.N.Varshney, Dr. (Ms.) Indira Chakravarty, Dr. (Mrs.) T.A. Kadarbhai, Shri Kaling Tayeng, Dr. S.K.Paul, and Shri Gibson G. Vedamani who could not attend the meeting.

Shri Shiv Narayan Sahu took the oath as new member in the Food Authority. All the present members signed "Specific Declaration of Interest" in respect of the agenda items to be considered in the meeting, before the start of the proceedings.

Item No.1: Confirmation of minutes of the last meeting held on 29th June, 2010

Confirmed the minutes of fifth meeting of the Food Authority held on 29th June, 2010.

Item No.2: Training Policy for FSSAI

Chairperson elaborated on the need for an appropriately designed training policy for FSSAI for efficient implementation of FSS Act, 2006 and informed that the present draft is at a preliminary stage and will be fine tuned based on feedback from stakeholders for finalizing the training policy. The following observations were made during the discussion:

- Considering the help of HR specialists is a good idea. However curriculum development is the main component and a group needs to be constituted in FSSAI which can work on the curriculum. Curriculum should be developed centrally and rolled out nationally to have uniformity.

- On-site training and hands-on experience should be considered on priority in the training policy.
- There was a concern that the objective of the training is lost once trained personnel are transferred to some other department. State governments should try to identify the staff for training which could be involved in food safety on long term basis or there should be a clear policy regarding transfer of such food safety trained personnel and their tenure.
- There should be consistency in the training. Keeping in view the rapid developments in the food sector, one month in-service mandatory training for FSOs after every 5 years seems to be inadequate. The FSOs should be given mandatory refresher courses every year.
- Training of the Adjudicating Officers at the States should be coordinated centrally by FSSAI so that curriculum and skills are uniform across the country.

It was agreed that FSSAI may take further action regarding review of the document, placing on the website and may bring again before the Authority once the training policy is in final shape.

Item No.3: Food Safety Management System in India- Proposed framework and related documents

Chairperson explained that keeping in view the emphasis placed by the Act on self compliance and primary responsibility for food safety on FBOs, there is a need for a food safety system in place with detailed guidance documents on food safety requirements, which will enable FBOs to assess themselves against the requirements and retain evidence of due diligence which could be periodically checked through inspection. The following points emerged during the discussion:

- There was a suggestion that there should be an explanatory note in Schedule 4 of the licensing regulations that these requirements will

be mandatory to the new units but need to be applied keeping in view local conditions and feasibility. Separately a checklist for inspections and guidance documents need to be developed to encourage compliance.

- The documents may be aligned with the Codex pattern as far as practicable.
- There was a view that best practices followed by FBOs need to be recognized. Module for grading of food establishments may be a good option.
- There is a need to create an environment where industry itself recognizes the importance of testing safety of their products. However, the access of food sellers/traders to laboratories and quick testing kits is going to be crucial. One option could be clustering of small FBOs which may have access to a lab in that area.

The members appreciated the framework and approach suggested by FSSAI and it was agreed that FSSAI may take further action regarding review the documents, placing on the website and may bring again before the Authority once the documents are in final shape.

Item No. 4: Food Testing Laboratories up-gradation and Accreditation system- Proposed framework

The members appreciated the strategy and framework proposed by FSSAI for strengthening the laboratory infrastructure in the country with the following observations.

- Representatives from some of the large and well established food laboratories with international experience may also be included in the proposed steering committee on the subject.
- There was a concern that interim/entry level standard for the labs may not be appropriate considering the regulatory function of the labs and when the laboratories are not up to the mark (i.e. NABL accredited), as well as the need to launch prosecution based on their results.

- CEO clarified that interim/entry level standard is nothing but a standard recognized by FSSAI. All State PFA labs need to upgrade themselves as per this FSSAI Standards requirements in a given time frame for being eligible for notification under section 43(1). Further, NABL parameters relevant to food safety need to be reviewed. We need to take a comprehensive approach and building the capacity of the public sector labs is very important along with considering the private labs for testing. A period of transition is therefore necessary.
- The issue regarding uniformity in the charges for testing fee by the lab was also discussed and there were differing views on the aspect. Any ceiling on the testing fee may not be appropriate. Another option could be to let the competition prevail between the labs in the matter of fixing rates subject to mandatory quality standards. It was clarified that even at present PFA Rules prescribe Rs.3000/= per sample as testing fee.
- The methods for testing followed by the labs should be uniform throughout the country. It was clarified that DGHS manual is being followed in the labs. However, this will be reviewed in due course to update it with new technology etc.
- Concern was also raised regarding the shortage of the public analysts. FSSAI proposed to set up a group of FSCs to look into the strategy for up-gradation of food laboratories in the states, review the curriculum for analysts and steps to increase their availability. In the mean time FSSAI is conducting qualifying examination for public analysts in November, 2010.

It was agreed that the FSSAI may take further action regarding review the documents, placing on the website and may bring again before the Authority once the documents are in final shape.

Item No.5: Consumer Food Safety Scheme / Competitive grant for R&D Projects

Shri Bejon Mishra acknowledged FSSAI's participation in the Consumer programmes organized in Uttar Pradesh during September, 2010 by sending two experts and providing very informative and useful literature. It was also suggested that short posters on key food safety messages should also be developed. The following points emerged during the discussion on the proposed scheme:

- Routing the application through the State Government may kill the essence of the scheme. Verification of NGOs need to come from community feedback on effectiveness of those organizations and proper documentation of the activities performed.
- FSSAI may require to develop its own internal mechanism for verification and learning could be gathered from TRAI and Gas Authority which are having their registered list of NGOs which are called thrice in a year for consultation.
- Instead of giving money FSSAI may provide technical support wherever possible.
- It was suggested that instead of making it mandatory to come through State Government, application should be through an open system and interested organizations may come through a transparent selection process. No advance should be given and let the first equity come from the organization. Final amount should be disbursed after published report and feedback from the target group. The organization should be held accountable for the proper use of money released.
- Although having a ceiling on financial assistance has its own advantage, it was also suggested that ceiling may depend on the utility, motive, objective and creativity of the project. There was a concern from CEO, FSSAI that the suggestion of releasing payments after completion of work may suit study/survey/workshop types of schemes but may not work in case of R&D projects which need to be

taken up through a focussed programme for identifying and encouraging capable institutions and researchers.

It was decided that scheme may be modified by FSSAI based on the suggestions and operationalised.

Item No.6: Scheme for Centre of Excellence and Food Safety Centers

The members appreciated the idea and mentioned that coordination would be the key for success and timelines for the project need to be shortened. The Authority agreed that FSSAI may take further action for operationalising the scheme after placing it on the website and inviting comments.

Item No. 7: Draft Regulation on Foods for Special Nutritional or Dietary uses

The Food Authority considered the draft regulations and the following observations were made during the discussion:

- New list of Recommended Daily Allowance (region-wise) is available and it needs to be incorporated.
- "Reasonably Safe" need to be clarified.
- A decision need to be taken about who will issue the license i.e. State or Central, for each category of product.
- Labelling provisions like visibility of the label, font and font size etc. for such products should be clearly defined.
- Technical expertise available in the States for handling licenses of such products and requirement on Centre may be checked, based on how many such new products have been licensed.
- What happens to the products which are available in the market? Lots of sub-standard food supplements are reported to be in the market. These should also be brought within the ambit of the regulations.

- "History of safe use" needs to be clearly defined. What duration of time will qualify and what type of study could be considered sufficient?
- Provisions related to Novel Foods need to be redrafted. In which cases are pre-market approvals not required?
- In the Annexure it is not clear how many standards are not mentioned in PFA where Codex standards are to be adopted.
- In terms of ingredients of such food products, everything need not be left to the manufacturer to decide and clearer categorisation is required based on safety.
- Extensive consultation would be needed for finalising the various provisions.

The Food Authority felt that FSSAI needs to review the draft regulation, take to the concerned scientific panel and then to scientific committee and have extensive consultation process for finalizing the regulation.

Item No.8: Strategy for drawing up/ revision of standards

The Food Authority considered and approved the document with the comment that it is an excellent document especially the time lines for drawing up/ revision of standard by FSSAI.

Item No.9: Standards for Energy Drinks, Olive Oil and Trans Fatty Acids

The following points emerged during the discussion:

- Industry representative was of the opinion that it may not be rational to put all energy drinks under 'caffeinated beverages'.
- The word 'energy' is misleading to the consumers. There is urgent need for a standards for caffeinated beverages in the interests of the consumer.
- It was also mentioned that in two states of USA there is complete ban on caffeinated drinks.

- In reference to Standards for TFAs, it was suggested that when we make standards, we should make sure that they are followed and we should encourage standards which encourage our indigenous oil seed crops.

Standards for Olive oil was not discussed during the Scientific Committee meeting on 02.11.2010 and the item was withdrawn at the instance of FSSAI. The Food Authority considered and authorized FSSAI to take further necessary action in terms of Energy Drinks as per the recommendations of the Scientific Committee. The draft standard for TFA as recommended by Scientific Committee was approved by the Authority for further action by FSSAI.

Item No.10: Any other item with the approval of Chairperson

- It was suggested that whenever any important document is ready is in FSSAI, if possible it may be sent to the members without waiting for the agenda of the meeting to give sufficient time to study the document. It was clarified that the Authority being final decision making body, has to see a draft only after the same has been finalized in consultation with Scientific Panel/Scientific Committee & other stakeholders wherever necessary. However, efforts will be made to circulate the documents as early as possible. Whenever the inputs of FSSAI are considered necessary even at the drafts stage, such documents may be brought up for discussion.
- Regarding priority of FSSAI's work, it was mentioned that Result Framework Document highlighting the FSSAI's priority is already available on website.
- Web master alert service regarding upload of any new document on website may be restarted.
- It was suggested that instead of sending hard copy of agenda by post, it may be posted on website and hard copy may be made available during the meeting.

- Food Authority also took note of the paper on draft Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill, 2010 and approved the stand taken by the Authority secretariat regarding the ambit of BRAI and FSSAI.

Vote of thanks: The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure-I

Following were present during the sixth meeting of the Food Authority held on 8th November, 2010 at 1100 Hrs at its Headquarter at FDA Bhawan, New Delhi.

Members of Food Authority:

1. Shri P.I.Suvrathan, Chairperson
2. Shri V.N.Gaur, Member-Secretary
3. Ms. Indrani Kar
4. Shri M.P.Singh
5. Dr. P. Sucharitha Murthy
6. Shri G. Narayan Raju
7. Shri Bejon Mishra
8. Shri V. Balasubramaniam
9. Shri Rajan Gupta
10. Shri Shiv Narayan Sahu
11. Shri Ajit B. Chavan (in place of Shri Siddharth Singh)