



FSOs & caterers' database steps to improve railway catering facilities

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A series of reformative steps, including food safety officers (FSOs) and health inspectors to carry out each task in each division of the Indian Railways and the creation of a caterers' database, will be initiated to improve the catering facilities and food safety aboard trains and at stations.

It was decided at the meeting that FSOs will cover each division of the Indian Railways and 300 health inspectors shall be deployed across the Railways to undertake the work of the FSOs and assist them.

A database of caterers and food suppliers will be created for each division of the Indian Railways by July 15, 2018. It will contain the details of vendors, online registration details and sample test done. A divisional railway manager (DRM) and senior divisional commercial manager (senior DCM) shall be in charge of the database at the divisional level, and a chief commercial manager (CCM)/ catering at the zonal level.

FSSAI, the country's apex food regulator, and the Indian Railways have decided to adopt a revised protocol for sample selection for food sample tests. Frequency of data collection will increase and surprise sample collection will be included in the database. A mobile app will be developed for the sample collection with the technology of geo-tagging. A decision was taken to conduct the third-party audit of vendors.

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The decision was taken at a high-level meeting to improve the same was chaired by Ashwani Lohani, chairman, Railway Board, with chairman and managing director, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), food safety commissioner, chief executive officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), additional member, commercial, Railway Board, director general, health, Railway Board and other senior officials at Rail Bhavan recently.

All vendors who sell any article of food themselves, including petty retailers, hawkers, temporary stall-holders or such food businesses, including small-scale or cottage or tiny food businesses, with an annual turnover not exceeding Rs 12 lakh or whose production capacity of food does not exceed 100kg or litre per day, must register with FSSAI.

Licenses are mandatory for food business operators (FBOs) involved in catering services having an annual turnover of over Rs 12 lakh per year. It has been decided that online registration for vendors will start within 15 days.