

# The Tribune

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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## Cleaning the dairy

It is the right of the consumer to get pure milk

MILK is the staple drink in Punjab and most Punjabis gulp down glassfuls of it in the firm faith that they owe their good health and strength to the nutritious properties of this farm-fresh dairy product. However, this belief has taken a beating over the past few years as what reaches their tables is not quite white. Horrific instances of milk being not just diluted with water but also adulterated to make it thicker and viscous with substances that may even be carcinogenic have become common. Pure milk is rare to procure. Unscrupulously greedy elements, having scant regard for food safety norms, make hay as the huge milk economy ensures an easy money-making opportunity. With more than 60 per cent of the lily-white samples failing the purity test, the taint on Punjab is the blackest in the country. Concerned — and rapped by the High Court and authorities — the state has under its Mission Tandrust programme conducted thousands of raids to check this nefarious malpractice that is playing havoc with the health of the unsuspecting consumers.

The tie-up of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) with Punjab for its pilot project aimed at educating farmers on milk contaminants holds the promise of supplementing the government's efforts. The pact will yield good practices by the suppliers if followed by stringent measures to ensure excellence of milk and milk products. In a bid to track the quality supplied by the unorganised vendors, the FSSAI also plans to certify their products after verification.

Incentives to the dairy farmers abiding by safety standards would hasten the process towards wholesome products. The phenomenal success of the cooperative model, Amul, pioneered by Verghese Kurien, holds the torchlight. He transformed India from a milk-deficit nation into the world's largest milk producer by making the milkmen a partner in the company. The authorities endeavouring to clean the system would do well to remember his advice: 'Any sensible government must learn to unleash the energy of its people and get them to perform instead of trying to get a bureaucracy to perform.'