

FSSAI ropes in third-party food auditing agencies

ETRetail | September 10, 2018

The regulation draws its powers from Section 44 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which empowers the Food Authority to recognize an organization or an agency for carrying out food safety audit and checking compliance with the Food Safety Management Systems required under the Act or the rules and regulations thereunder. Varun Jain |



New Delhi: To strengthen the [food safety](#) surveillance system, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said, it has envisaged audits of Food Business Operators through third-party private auditing agencies. For the same, FSSAI has notified the Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing) Regulation 2018.

The regulation draws its powers from Section 44 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which empowers the Food Authority to recognize an organization or an agency for carrying out food safety audit and checking compliance with the [Food Safety Management](#) Systems required under the Act or the rules and regulations thereunder.

At present, FSSAI has provisionally recognized 22 audit agencies in accordance with Draft Food Safety and Standard (Food Safety Auditing) Regulation, 2017. These include national and international food safety audit agencies like DNV, [Bureau Veritas](#), [Intertek](#), MS Certification, IRCLASS, SGS, BIS, TUV, Indocert among others. Competent agencies satisfying the eligibility criteria as laid in the Food Safety and Standard (Food Safety Auditing) Regulation, 2018 can apply to FSSAI for recognition under these regulations.

These third party agencies will be working in close coordination with the government food safety department. The agencies will be conducting audits to ascertain the compliance with standards of food safety and hygiene prescribed under Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Business) Regulation, 2011.

For further clarity in respect of conducting such audits, FSSAI will declare category/type of food businesses which will be subject to mandatory audits and the frequency of audits based on risk classification. Food Businesses classified by Food Authority for mandatory Food Safety Audits are liable to get their businesses timely audited by recognized Auditing Agencies. Food businesses which are not subject to mandatory Food Safety auditing can also opt to audit their businesses on voluntary basis. This will encourage self-compliance among them.

The Audit Process involved in assessing the food safety management system of a Food Business Operator shall be based on IS/ISO 19011:2011 (Guidelines for auditing management systems). FBOs will have to get their businesses audited on the basis of the frequency prescribed for their kind of businesses by FSSAI. Based on their audit reports submitted by the agency, the frequency of their inspections by regulatory officials will be decreased or increased as the case may be.

Satisfactory Audits will lead to less frequent regulatory inspections, except the regulatory sampling by Central or State Licensing Authority. Apart from these mandatory audits, these agencies can also be used by FSSAI for conducting audits on central institutions like government agencies like railways, defence etc.

These agencies will also be used to rate catering establishments under FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme and Responsible Place to Eat schemes under Project 'Serve Safe'. An Expression of Interest has also simultaneously been floated to invite additional agencies for these schemes which have been initiated with the intent of ensuring that consumers can make informed choices and food businesses are encouraged to showcase and improve their food hygiene standards.