

## No such thing as ‘permissible limit’ for formalin use: FSSAI official

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PANAJI: An official of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), on Monday, said there is no such thing as “permissible limit for formalin use.”

Bhaskar N, an advisor (quality assurance) at FSSAI, who was on a special visit to the state to conduct a joint test on fish contamination, and demonstrate the proper testing procedure, said that the Directorate of Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) had misconstrued the word permissible limit in its initial fish test report, and added that might have happened due to the panicky situation.

He was speaking at a press conference in the presence of Health Minister Vishwajit Rane, additional health secretary Ashok Kumar, FDA director Jyoti Sardessai, and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT)-Cochin scientists Dr Laly SJ and Dr Ashok Kumar.

“There is no permissible limit for formaldehyde use. It can’t be added to any food or perishable items. We have now formed a scientific panel to suggest the limit for natural content of formaldehyde in fish,” he said.

The CIFT scientist Dr Laly SJ, who was a part of the team that developed a rapid detection kit ‘CIFTTest Kit’, conducted spot testing for the media person to trace formalin in fish, using the kit, and showed the strip turning blue in 30 seconds when the test was conducted without wearing gloves, indicating the presence of formalin.

“The test should be conducted with disinfected hands and wearing gloves,” he said.

Countering the allegation made by the Congress party about the fish being tested positive for formalin, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said the procedure followed by the opposition while carrying out the test on fish using CIFT kit was improper and unscientific.

“The fish was tested with contaminated hands without wearing gloves, and as a result the strips from rapid detection kit turned blue, showing the presence of formalin,” he added.

He said that the FDA team along with CIFT scientists and FSSAI official on Monday tested 17 fish samples — sardines, kingfish, mackerel, tongue fish (Iepo), squids (mankyo), black pompret, red snapper (tamosa) and silver belly (velli) — collected from Margao and Panaji, using rapid detection kits, developed by the CIFT, which revealed no presence of formalin in the fish.

The additional health secretary Ashok Kumar, said that the detailed enquiry into formalin row is in progress.

“The FDA official should have not publicly disclosed the Schiff’s test result, which is not a final test. This had never happened in the past. We will probe the role of officials involved in formalin row,” Kumar added.