

Ahmedabad Mirror

Gujarat takes street food seriously

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E-Paper

When it comes to clean street food, Ahmedabad and Gujarat outrank all other cities and states. With three approved "Clean Street Food Hubs" and another 5 either in the pipeline or already recommended, Gujarat is far ahead of other states ensuring hygienic food and clean premises for the street food business. Food Safety and Standards Organisation of India (FSSAI) has launched an initiative to promote hygienic street food across India.

An FSSAI tag for a cluster, hub or food truck park assures foodies that the food served to them is prepared in hygienic conditions. FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwalsaid, "Gujarat has taken the lead in ensuring clean street food hubs that in turn has led to other states also recommending their food clusters for the same."

Ahmedabad has its hands full Ahmedabad became the first city in the country to have a Clean Street Food Hub when Kankaria Lake cluster was accredited by the FSSAI in September 2018.

Ahmedabad is the only city in the country to now have two FSSAI-approved street food hubs - Kankaria Lake and Urban Chowk at Zydus Crossroads on SG Highway. Besides these, Gopi Talav in Surat has also got the clean hub tag by FSSAI. Food Junction (behind Rajpath Club) and Food Truck Park (opposite KarnavatiClub) have been recommended to FSSAI for auditing and approval.

Dr Hemant Koshia, Gujarat's Food and Drugs Control Administration Commissioner, told Mirror, "We have taken up this project on a war footing as Gujaratis love to eat out and if the food is declared hygienic and monitored constantly, it is better for the people."

Other hubs may soon get tag Gujarat has sent three names to FSSAI for approval: Maa Bharti Udhyan Food Court in Dahod, Food Street in Kudasan (Gandhinagar) and Ratri Khani PeeniBazaar in Vadodara.

Gujarat starts, India will follow However, apart from Gujarat, only five other states have sent recommendations to the Centre regarding the approval for food clusters. Currently, only one street food hub outside Gujarat has got the 'Clean' tag by FSSAI -Chappan Dukaan in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Assi Ghat in Varanasi is the only recommendation from Uttar Pradesh and is in the pipeline. Three recommendations from Maharashtra - Juhu Chowpatty and Girgaon Chowpatty in Mumbai and Khao Galli in Pune - are in the pipeline. Odisha has sent three recommendations all from Bhubaneswar and Goa has sent four, all from different cities.

144 sites identified across India When asked why only six states had given impetus to this initiative even when the FSSAI had identified 144 potential sites all over the country, Agarwalsaid, "The system is just getting streamlined, but we hope to get recommendations of another 150 Clean Street Food Hubs in the next three months."

'More income for vendors' Arbind Singh, National Coordinator, National Association of Street Vendors in India (NASVI), said, "While it is obviously good for the people who prefer to eat out rather than in restaurants, it greatly helps the vendors who can serve their customers hygienic food. It also adds to their income as the clean street food tag draws more people

'Safeguard small restaurants' Narendra Somani, President of Gujarat Hotels and Restaurants Association, said, "While it is good that street food is becoming more hygienic, the government should also take care that small restaurants are not impacted since they are paying a lot of taxes and maintaining good hygiene, but street good vendors often escape the tax net." Gujarat has taken the lead in ensuring clean street food hubs that in turn has led to other states also recommending their food clusters for the same

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Dr Hemant Koshia, Commissioner, Gujarat FDCA It's good that street food is becoming hygienic, but the government should ensure small restaurants are not impacted as they pay a lot of taxes and keep good hygiene.