

FSSAI releases maiden food safety index for states; Chandigarh tops

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The Union Territory (UT) of Chandigarh topped the 2018-19 food safety index, which recognising the efforts of states, food businesses and individuals in promoting food safety in 2018-19. It was released by FSSAI on the occasion of first-ever World Food Safety Day, declared by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018.

The first State Food Safety Index (SFSI) was to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety. The categories included human resources and institutional arrangements, compliance, food testing - infrastructure and surveillance, training and capacity building and consumer empowerment.

The Punjab and Haryana capital was followed by Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. These states got distinction in the parameters prescribed by the apex food regulator.

States such as Bihar, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh followed close behind. The rest of the states didn't find a mention in the list.

Meanwhile, following the certification of several Clean Street Food Hubs in various cities based on third-party audits and training of street food vendors, now Golden Temple Street, Amritsar has also been recognised as a Clean Street Food Hub.

Further, to recognise the efforts at the community level to promote food safety, FSSAI has also declared seven campuses such as those of universities, schools, colleges/institutes, workplaces, defence/paramilitary establishments, hospitals and jails as Eat Right Campus.

Based on a five star-rating by compliance to a set of well-defined benchmarks on food safety and hygiene, food waste management, healthy diets, promotion of local/seasonal food and awareness generation, IIT Gandhinagar, IIT Roorkee, LBSNAA Mussourie, Unilever Bengaluru, Wipro Bengaluru, HCL Noida and Genpact Gurugram were recognised for their exemplary standards.

FSSAI has instituted the Eat Right Awards to recognise the contribution of food companies and individuals to empower citizens to choose safe and healthy food options, which would help improve their health and well-being.

The Expert Selection Committee, shortlisted 13 awards out of a total of 123 applications in five categories, namely food products, food services, organised retail, innovative solutions, safe food including testing, and community outreach and engagement. Out of a total of 83 applications, 14 awards were given for individual contributions made by young chefs, professionals and media influencers.

Also, the Food Safety Magic Box, a do-it-yourself food testing kit, comprises a manual and equipment to check for food adulterants, which schoolchildren can use in their classroom laboratories was also launched on the occasion.

Another new-age, hand-held battery operated device called Raman 1.0 from Oak Analytics, India was also launched. This device performs rapid detection (in less than one minute) of economically-driven adulteration in edible oils, fats and ghee.

The equipment tests over 250 samples per battery charge, collects and stores data on the cloud using a smart device. This is the first of 19 such equipment and methods that have been provisionally approved by FSSAI for strengthening the food testing infrastructure in the country.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI pointed out, "FSSAI is a very different kind of organisation compared to food regulators across the world."

"First, we have brought food safety and nutrition together in the national health agenda. Second, we focus on consumer empowerment. Third, we work through partnerships and convergence," he added.

He added, "Thus, with a series of useful resources and initiatives for people and incentivising safe food practices through multiple recognition systems at the state, city, community, organisational and individual levels, FSSAI has raised the bar for food safety in the country and strives to achieve more as we progress further."

Present on the occasion, Dr Harsh Vardhan, minister of health and family welfare and the chief guest, emphasised on reducing food waste and sharing surplus food.

Other dignitaries present on the occasion include Minister of State Ashwani Kumar Choubey, health secretary Preeti Sudan, and FSSAI chairperson Rita Teotia.