

Milk safety: Feed producers told to meet BIS' mark

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By B Anbuselvan

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CHENNAI: The Centre has fixed a deadline of June 10, 2020, for animal feed manufacturers to comply with regulatory standards prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). It has also banned import of feed which does not have BIS certification mark. Cattle feed is a major source by which milk gets contaminated with Aflatoxin M1, a carcinogen. The order by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been issued to all States, two months after a national-level survey revealed the presence of the carcinogen in milk samples taken from Tamil Nadu and a few other States.

FSSAI has said foods of animal origin (such as milk) are at times found to be non-compliant with relevant standards prescribed under the law. It is examining the possibility of framing feed regulations, supported with appropriate amendments to the Food Safety Act. "On an interim basis, it has been decided that commercial feeds and feed materials intended for food-producing animals (such as cattle and sheep) shall comply with relevant BIS standards and shall not be manufactured/imported, distributed

and sold except under BIS certification mark,” said the directive issued on December 10 by P Karthikeyan, deputy director, FSSAI, New Delhi.

The FSSAI has given feed manufacturers a deadline of six months, from the date of the order, to comply with it. Following reports of the presence of Aflatoxin M1 in milk, last month the State government constituted a high-level committee to conduct a detailed study. Cattle are fed with paddy straw, fodder and concentrate mixture. The concentrate feed is prepared using different varieties of cake along with food grains, husk, minerals and molasses from sugar mills.

Milk producers say ingredients used for preparing cattle feed are purchased from small-scale companies in rural parts of the State and currently there are no provisions to examine the quality standards. “Most farmers will not even weigh the feed purchased. Regulation of cattle feed may be appreciated, but a majority of dairy farmers are unaware of the standards and other safety parameters,” said M G Rajendran, general secretary, Tamil Nadu Milk Producers’ Welfare Association (TNMPWS).

Tamil Nadu Food Grain Merchants Association State president S P Jayaprakasam said the association was informed by State health officials that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will conduct a detailed study into cattle feed and only later would regulations be decided on. “We will create awareness among the manufacturers over toxic content. However, fodder gets contaminated mainly because of fertilisers”. “All dairy farmers are being sensitised by our field level staff and veterinarians over quality of feed,” said a senior official of Animal Husbandry department.