



Karnataka ranks 9th in food safety among 20 large states Kerala and Tamil Nadu are ranked second and third, respectively

Suraksha P, DHNS, Bengaluru, SEP 24 2021, 18:00 IST



Representative image. Credit: DH File Photo

Karnataka is ranked ninth among 20 large states by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in the recently released State Food Safety Index for 2020-21.

Neighbouring states Kerala and Tamil Nadu are ranked second and third, respectively. The index measures the performance of states and Union territories on significant parameters of food safety, like inspections carried out for high-risk food businesses, mode of inspections used and the number of food samples lifted for testing.

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As of 2019, there were only 49 full-time Food Safety Officers (FSOs), and 114 part-time ones. There are five state-run food-testing labs but none are accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

Dr Harshvardhan B, joint commissioner, Food Safety Commissionerate, told DH, "The state government has not released the budget for us. Now, we have placed various work orders. By December or January, we have been asked to get NABL accreditation for Mysuru, Bengaluru, and Belagavi labs."

"A consultant has also been appointed in this regard. We did not have a building in Kalaburagi for a lab and have rented one there."

The state has scored only 10 out of 20 in human resources and institutional data in the index.

"We are awaiting the amendment of Cadre and Recruitment Rules, for which we had requested a modification. Until then, no permanent staff can be hired. The entire food safety department is staffed by in-charge officers from the health department," he added.

Ramesh Agarwal, CEO, Food Safety Works, a training partner of FSSAI, said, "Kerala and Tamil Nadu have scored high on enforcement. In fact, Kerala scores higher than Gujarat ranked No.1 in compliance. There is no monitoring of expired licences. There is no inspection of meat industries which are high-risk food businesses. We don't know the status of the mobile food testing lab."

Out of 30, Karnataka has scored 13 in compliance which is less than 50 per cent. Training and capacity building of laboratory staff and personnel have also been found wanting in the state. As far as hygiene rating of restaurants and checks on food offered at places of worship are concerned, it has been very slow, said Agarwal.