

Sarasbaug Chowpatty falls in line after raid

By [Vicky Pathare](#), Pune Mirror | Mar 30, 2019, 06:00 AM IST



Vendors were apprehensive of action by PMC after they revamped their stalls;
PIC: MANOJ BIDKAR

State FDA took action to goad reluctant vendors into the first clean food hub bid

The state Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has allegedly come down hard on adamant food vendors at Sarasbaug Chowpatty to cooperate with them in developing the eatery-dotted thoroughfare as the first clean street food hub (CSFH) in the city. While the project was in the pipeline for quite some time recalcitrant food vendors had been opposing the move reportedly with an eye on individual profits while they wanted the government to shoulder the responsibility for the entire investment. Meanwhile efforts made by the Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), FDA and Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) were all in vain till the FDA authorities decided to crack down on health and hygiene standards at the chowpatty, following which most vendors fell in line.

The CSFH initiative was conceived by FSSAI to improve the quality of street food to the level of food courts and established hotels and restaurants. The respective state FDAs were then given the responsibility of conducting training programmes and audits. In Maharashtra, Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur were selected for pilot projects. Although the Punebased chowpatty was supposed to be the first to turn CSFH but with the vendors dragging their feet on the issue the Juhu and Girgaum Chowpatty bagged the CSFH tag earlier this month.

State FDA commissioner, Pallavi Darade, said, “We have nothing to do with anybody’s profit but are concerned about the health of the public. All we want is that every food vendor should follow the prescribed food safety and hygiene norms and this was supposed to happen with the help of CSFH. With an aim to make the highly undisciplined stall owners at least think about the quality of the food cooked and served there, FDA started inspections.”

“Most vendors at Sarasbaug Chowpatty were found not following the norms and action was taken against them. The motive behind the CSFH or routine inspection is to ensure that the rules are followed and hygienic food is provided to the public.”

The authorities had held several meetings during visits in the past to sensitise the stall owners and cooks about how to maintain food quality and what criterion to adhere to. The stall owners were given training and instructions on good practices. The authorities inspected the cooking process, cleanliness parameters observed during the cooking, use of clean water, distance between two stalls and solid waste management. Despite these efforts by the authorities the vendors were adamant.

Suresh Deshmukh, joint commissioner, FDA, Pune region, said, “The Sarasbaug Chowpatty was supposed to be developed as the first CSFH but vendors were adamant. They were only interested in what help the state government and civic body would give them. After action was taken by the FDA they agreed to cooperate in the initiative.”

“Now all doubts among vendors about PMC’s action is also clear. We have decided to make the Clean Street Food hub within a month,” said Deshmukh.

Gulab Bhagwat, president of the Sarasbaug Chowpatty Association, said, “The FDA and other officials had visited several times in the past and given us training and instructions about healthy practices. They want to make the shops look alike and we have to make the development. But we were worried about PMC action after we spent money in making the changes.”

Bhagwat said, “We don’t want any financial aid and we are ready to support the initiative but we want the PMC to cooperate with us.”

Nagnath Jadhav, owner of Ramprasad Juice Centre, said, “The FDA has taken action against my hotel and issued me notice but I made the changes they have asked. Now we have agreed to the decision and had a meeting three days back. We are all going to participate in it.”