Pawan Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI. **(Reuters)**

Govt to spend ₹20 cr to make indigenous food testing kits

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- FSSAI has approved 30 rapid food testing kits and devices under the recently finalized regulations
- At least 10 states in India are not equipped to ensure food safety, because of scarcity of staff and food testing laboratory infrastructure, FSSAI says

NEW DELHI : The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will invest over ₹20 crore in developing indigenous food testing kits.

FSSAI has approved 30 rapid food testing kits and devices under the recently finalized regulations, which aim to strengthen the food testing ecosystem in the country. However, only two out of the 30 kits and devices are indigenously manufactured, though many research and scientific institutions in India are engaged in the development of such kits and devices.

"FSSAI has initiated steps so that indigenously developed kits and devices are validated and approved under the FSSAI regulations on a fast-track basis. We will spend more than ₹20 crore and procure rapid food testing kits and devices," said Pawan Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI.

"There is a market potential of ₹1,000 crore for such kits and devices in India alone. Once such kits and devices are widely used for regulatory purposes, the food

industry will also begin to use them for internal quality assurance and quality control," he added.

FSSAI has started providing these kits to states for use by field officers to get quicker and validated results for tests on different food products such as milk and edible oils. States could also buy such kits and devices from the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal to make them widely available with enforcement officials.

"The devices ensuring faster, better, and cheaper real-time testing of food will soon become an integral part of quality assurance and quality control programmes in the food industry, and also for regulatory and surveillance in 2020," said Agarwal.

"Steps have been initiated to make these available on the GeM portal so that further procurement can be made by governments and local bodies on their own. FSSAI has invested more than ₹5 crore on this so far," said Agarwal.

At least 10 states in India are not equipped to ensure food safety, because of scarcity of staff and food testing laboratory infrastructure, FSSAI said.

Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Telengana and Uttarakhand are the worst performing states on food safety, according to FSSAI.