

DownToEarth

FSSAI plans to train food safety workers

Govt claims Food Safety Mitras will help reduce hassles for businesses

By **Meenakshi Sushma**

17 October 2019



Union health minister Harsh Vardhan launched the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) 'Food Safety Mitra' (FSM) scheme on October 16, 2019 — the World Food Day.

The scheme will increase transparency in the food business and reduce hassle, the government claimed, by training individuals to assist food business operators (FBO) with registration and licencing.

'Mitra' is the word for 'friend' in several Indian languages.

They will have three roles.

A digital *mitra* will file new applications for licensing or registration, respond to queries and look into suspended licenses or registration.

A trainer *mitra* will train food safety supervisors and conduct trainings at 'Eat Right' campuses certified by the FSSAI.

A hygiene *mitra* will conduct audits at FBO outlets to check if they are implementing hygiene safety guidelines. Hygiene *mitras* will also train food safety supervisors and food handlers about safe and hygienic practices to handle food.

FBOs will need to pay the service providers Rs 100-Rs 5,000.

Those keen to be FSMs will need to register on the FSSAI website from November 26, 2019.

A graduation in food safety or hygiene will be required.

Selected applicants will be interviewed after an online test. Those successful will be trained by the FSSAI and certified. The certificate will need to be renewed every two years. They will be eligible to assist more than 25 FBOs to comply with the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006.

The government has already selected an initial 15 *mitras*, whose certificates were awarded on October 16.

The scheme will majorly "focus on small FBOs and food vendors to enable food safety ecosystems at the ground level," Pawan Aggarwal, chief executive officer of FSSAI, said. He claimed that the initiative will create self-employment opportunities.

"Around 50,000 entrepreneurs are expected to join the scheme. Through services such as licencing registration, hygiene rating and food safety training, we estimate that more than 2,500,000 FBOs will be engaged," Aggarwal said.

The FSSAI also introduced an initiative to train domestic workers in healthy cooking (eg, using less salt and sugar, not reusing cooking oil, etc) and another to reduce food wastage.