

FSSAI training for Jharkhand street food vendors

Business nil, sellers reel in financial crisis; no assistance from state government so far

By Antara Bose in Jamshedpur

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The deserted street food vendor zone in Bistupur on Monday

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Pushendra Kumar, a fast-food seller in Sakchi, would earn Rs 20,000 a month by selling parathas during the afternoon; but for the past two months, he has been sitting idle with no work and no money in his account to make ends meet.

Thousands of street food vendors who were dependent on their daily businesses are now expecting to reopen their outlets as the National Association of Street vendors of India (NASVI) and Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC), have decided to organize an online safety training to suit the new changes in hygiene standards.

As business is nil and customers will be concerned about hygiene, online training with a certification from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), shall deal with personal and customer safety, food safety and hygiene, and workplace safety and business development in the time of pandemic.

The Jharkhand Street Vendors Union has taken the responsibility to train the street vendors on the Zoom app, which is slated to begin this weekend or the next.

“The FSSAI will have a new set of guidelines because of the pandemic. Hygiene shall be very important but what’s most important is to let these vendors do business as most of them are reeling under financial crisis,” said Pankaj Srivastava, president of Street Food Vendors Union, a member organization of NASVI.

Jharkhand has about 1.5 lakh registered food vendors while cities like Jamshedpur and Ranchi have more than 5000 registered street food vendors each.

The union had made 750 labour cards under the state government so that the beneficiaries could get a one-time Rs 1000 cash transfer, but none of them have received any assistance so far.

Union members say that though there no central or state government guidelines to open food kiosks; they shall personally meet the respective deputy commissioners and apprise them of the problem.

“We are in debt. Liabilities are too many- school fees of children and medical expenses. If we do not open, we have no future. The central government had announced a Rs 10,000 loan but that’s negligible as compared to the losses we have faced. The government has allowed Shramik trains and even airline services, then why not street food,” said Binod Pandey, a street food vendor in Bistupur.

The unions are now trying to ensure that maximum number of street food vendors can avail this training for better business.