

Universal, Country-Specific Food Safety Standards Needed: Union Health Minister

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The minister was speaking after inaugurating Global Food Regulators Summit 2023 is organised in the national capital for the first time as a G20 event by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



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New Delhi: Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya today said there is a need to frame universal food safety standards as well as country-specific standards after detailed discussions at a global level to tackle the challenges of food contamination, lifestyle diseases and imbalance in nutrition intake.

The minister was speaking after inaugurating Global Food Regulators Summit 2023 is organised in the national capital for the first time as a G20 event by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

The two-day summit serves as a platform for food regulators from over 40 countries to collaborate and work together.

Addressing the event, Mr. Mandaviya underscored that there is a need for a global platform for detailed discussions and deliberations on food safety, similar to the lines of the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of WHO.

He said an annual meeting to discuss standards by United Nations' food standards body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, is not enough.

"The way habitual disease is growing, the way we are finding contamination in food and the way imbalanced nutrients are becoming part of our food, there is a need for universal discussion," Mr. Mandaviya asserted.

Based on the universal discussion, he said each country can prepare its own strategy, syllabus and standards.

"Therefore, there is a need for two types of standards, one universal standard and other country-wise standards," the minister said.

Mr. Mandaviya asked global food regulators to take into account climate, human health, animal health and plant health while framing standards.

Noting that subjects of health and food are interlinked, he said the intake of safe and nutritious food is essential for better health.

The health minister highlighted the measures taken by the Modi-led government to combat the Covid-19 pandemic and how India helped other countries through the supply of medicines and vaccines.

"Health has never been a commerce for India. For India, health is service," he said.

Mr. Mandaviya expressed concern over the excessive use of chemical fertilisers that affects soil health, climate and food quality.

He highlighted that the government has recently launched the PM-PRANAM scheme that seeks to incentivise state governments to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers and promote alternate fertilisers, natural farming and organic farming.

During the event, Mr. Mandaviya released 'Food-o-Copoeia', a comprehensive collection of food category-wise monographs, serving as a single-point reference for all applicable standards for specific product categories.

He also launched the common regulators' platform 'SaNGRAH' (Safe Food for Nations: Global Food Regulatory Authorities Handbook).

It is a comprehensive database of food regulatory authorities from 76 countries, presenting their mandates, food safety ecosystems, food testing facilities, and contact details for food authorities.

The summit aims to provide a platform for the participants to deliberate on a cohesive network on food safety and regulatory aspects; an effective understanding of compliance requirements and a mutual exchange of best practices, experiences and success stories on food safety norms/regulations.