

Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI), a Multifaceted approach towards Food Safety

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Abstract

The FSSAI is integral in controlling food safety in India, highlighting the agency's importance in guaranteeing wholesome and safe food for human consumption. Its goals include regulating the manufacturing, distribution, storage, and sale of food products and combining many food-related legislations under one roof. The statute guarantees that food satisfies consumer standards in every way and offers customers legal recourse if standards are broken. The FSSAI is the primary regulatory body for food safety, and the government is in charge of enacting regulations about the act.

Introduction

Food is a basic human need. It should be healthy, nutritious, and readily available. The government has the responsibility to provide safer food to citizens. Shockingly, one-third of the deaths worldwide are caused by foodborne infections. Food adulteration, a criminal act, involves compromising food quality by adding unauthenticated substances. These substances are added to meet the selfish needs of the sellers, such as prolonging shelf life, enhancing taste, and improving appearance. This deceitful practice misleads consumers and leads to diseases and malnutrition. Safe food should meet the acceptable risk criteria since zero risk is impossible. The increasing demand for less time-consuming meals increases the concern for food safety. Food safety is a multidisciplinary approach that covers everything from production or preparation to distribution. Different laws enacted under varied ministries led to a dysfunctional system of nonconductive food standards—a highly integrated system of rules and regulations needed to guarantee the system's potency.

Food Safety and Standard Act 2006

FSS Act 2006, pivotal legislation in food safety, plays a central role in assuring the standard and safety of our food. Establishing the FSSAI under the FSS Act 2006 was a significant milestone in promoting food safety, hygiene, and quality (Jena, 2018). The

proliferation of multiple food laws, ministries, and organizations has led to poor food safety implementation in India. The FSS Act 2006 emerged as a crucial solution, emphasizing the urgent need for a single law and regulatory body to ensure food safety. The act defines food as any substance used for human consumption during its production, preparation, and processing that should be free from live animals, plants, cosmetics, drugs, animal feeds, narcotics, and psychotropics. It consolidates many acts, such as FPO, MMPO, PFA, VOP, MFPO, etc. The act guarantees citizens safe and healthy food, places accountability on the producers and distributors, and provides food recall, improvement, and compensation to the victim. The practical implementation of the act is done by the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India through the officials appointed who can carry out confiscation, investigation, and prosecution for the successful enforcement of food and safety standards outlined in the act.

Roles and functions of FSSAI

The FSSAI is essential in regulating food safety in India, underscoring its significance in ensuring safe and nutritious food for human needs. Its objectives include consolidating multiple food-related laws into one umbrella and establishing a food safety authority to regulate food product production, storage, sale, and distribution (Vasanthi & Bhat, 2018). The act ensures that food meets consumer's standards in all aspects and provides legal protection to consumers if it is violated. The government is responsible for making regulations regarding the act, with the prime responsible authority for food safety being the FSSAI. The act also covers the food distribution chain from manufacture to distribution, shifting from a regulatory one to a self-compliant authority. The functions of FSSAI include framing standards for food safety and the accreditation of food testing labs. The body is responsible for collecting data concerning food consumption, adulteration, and the current risks and is an accountable organization for promoting standards in food safety. FSSAI gives food safety licenses and

accreditation to food businesses and plays a significant role in fledgling international food standards. They can also bestow technical advice and assistance to the central government regarding food safety.

Structure of FSSAI

FSSAI functions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. According to the FSS Act 2006, a Food Safety Commission must be appointed for every state. Food Safety Commission is responsible for appointing a Food Safety Officer for an area. He has the authority to inspect the places of food, collect samples of food, get them tested, and seize the places from operation if the food samples are found inappropriate for human consumption. Food Safety Officer appoints Food Analysts to carry out the testing of food samples. Every district should have a Designated Officer who can issue, cancel, and resume a food business license. The food is

tested in state and private laboratories accredited by NABL.

Licensing/Registration from FSSAI

Every food business in the country needs a license from FSSAI. Central and state/union territories' licensing authorities can issue licenses. State/Union territories give licenses to businesses whose annual income falls under INR 12 lakhs. Product approval from FSSAI is necessary to license the food business. The licensing authority audits and inspects annually to maintain the standard of operation.

Initiatives taken by FSSAI

FSSAI commencing many initiatives to propagate food safety standards in schools, restaurants, households, railway stations, etc. These initiatives increased the country's socio-economic status.

Table 1: Initiatives for food business

	Initiatives for Food Business	
1.	Food Licensing/Registration System (FLRS)	FSSAI launched FLRS in 2012 to issue licenses to food business operators. It is an online application form where we can apply for a permit, track our application, and check the suitability criteria based on their locality and activities conducted there. It also sends SMS or mail to complete the registration process.
2	Food Safety Compliance System (FoSCoS)	It is an expanded, improved version of FLRS since the latter is resistant to changes and innovation. Integrating many of FSSAI's IT platforms, like FoSCoRIS, FoSTaC, FSM, AMS, etc., converts the licensing forum into a combined compliance platform. FoSCoS is flexible for future integrations and expansions.
3	Food product identity verification system (FPIVS)	The FPIVS amalgamates food safety standards with special and non-specified foods, such as proprietary foods or nutraceuticals, to meet the necessary safety standards. After approval, a product identifier is generated, enabling them to apply for a license from the authority.
4	Food Import Clearance System (FICS)	It is an online system for speeding up licensing and food import clearance. The FICS manual contains the necessary details for exporting food products to India.
5	Indian Food Laboratory Network (INFoLNET)	A system that combines the laboratories in the country for rapid testing of food samples, tracking, and online requests can be submitted for the collection and dispatch of the samples.
6	Food Safety Knowledge Assimilation Network (FSKAN)	The development of a scientific community to pass valuable knowledge within the system and joint projects are undertaken involving scientists and universities in which FSSAI sponsors them.

Table 2: Initiatives for citizen

Sl. No	Initiatives for Citizen	
1	Eat right India	Launched in 2018, it aims to improve public health and reduce lifestyle diseases by generating awareness of unhealthy eating habits. Consumers should prefer healthy food choices, and business operators should invest in them. Food should be low in fat, sugar, and salt.
2	Safe and nutritious food (SNF)	Concentrate on creating awareness of all aspects of life through initiatives like SNF@home, SNF@hospital, Serve Safe, etc. The pink, orange, and yellow books were developed to guide home, school, and workplace.
3	Food Fortification	Add essential micronutrient nutrients like vitamins, iron, and folic acid to staple foods to combat micronutrient deficiencies. The +F logo has been provided to discern the fortified food.
4	Save food, share food, share joy.	Reduced food wastage and enhanced food donation will allow IFSA (Indian Food Sharing Agency) to incorporate food collection agencies, including food businesses, the government, and citizens, to decrease food loss in the supply chain.
5	Jaivik Bharat	Identifying organic products from nonorganic ones uses a Jaivik Bharat logo and a tagline, Jaivik Bharat. The website portal Indian Organic Integrity database has been generated to provide more information on organic products.
6	Safe water for healthy living	To ensure safe packaged water, which can be verified through the Safe Water Portal using the registered license number of the product.
7	Milk quality survey	Safe and hygienic milk production is achieved through awareness of common contaminants and identifying procedures to identify them.
9	Diet4Life	Safeguard babies from Inborn Errors of Metabolism through adequate early nutritious and healthy practices through the support of parents and health professionals.
10	Project Dhoop	Vitamin D deficiency can be reduced in teenagers by using sunlight from 11 to 1 p.m. and adding fortified foods with vitamin D. Noon school assemblies will help school children effectively utilize sunlight.

Offences and Penalties

After the food analysis assessment, the designated officer shall decide whether to punish the offender with a fine or imprisonment. Depending on the severity of the crime, the acceptable amount varies from 1 to 10 lakh Rs or six years' imprisonment.

Conclusion: The FSS Act of 2006, a landmark piece of food safety law, is essential to guarantee the safety and standard of our food. The FSSAI was established under

the FSS Act of 2006 to advance food safety, cleanliness, and quality. The poor execution of food safety in India can be attributed to the proliferation of food laws, ministries, and agencies. A critical solution that highlighted the pressing need for a unified law and regulatory authority to assure food safety was the FSS Act of 2006. The FSSAI is responsible for accrediting food testing labs and creating standards for food safety. The body is an accountable institution that promotes

food safety standards and gathers statistics on food consumption, adulteration, and current risks. FSSAI is a significant contributor to the development of global food standards and grants food enterprises accreditation and licenses related to food safety(Bera et al., 2023).

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