

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India's Premier News Agency

Dated: 11.10.2017 (Wednesday)

Govt to set up mini food parks, bats for direct farm sourcing

New Delhi, Oct 10 (PTI) The government will focus on setting up of mini food parks to raise the processing level, Union Minister Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti said today and asked the industry to buy agri items directly from farmers to boost their income.

Jyoti, who is Minister of State for Food Processing, said all 42 sanctioned mega food parks will be operational by 2019.

She assured the industry that the ministry will consider and take up any of their concern related to GST.

Addressing an Assocham conference on FMCG, the minister said the government will facilitate setting up of 'mini food park' across the country on smaller land parcel to boost food processing level.

This will be done under the new Rs 6,000 crore SAMPADA scheme approved by the government recently, she added. The ministry provides subsidy of up to Rs 50 crore to set up a mega food park.

There is a need, Jyoti said, to increase the food processing level to reduce wastage of farm produce. The minister felt that farmers' income will not be doubled unless their produce is procured directly.

The processing sector will also get their raw material at cheaper rates and better quality if they buy agri produce directly from farmers, she suggested.

Apart from food security, the minister said there is a need to focus on food safety.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal said the regulator came out with standards of various products in the last few years which are globally benchmarked and some are in the pipeline.

The FSSAI, he added, is open to making changes in standards based on the feedback of stakeholders.

"As we move forward, we will focus on compliance of food safety law in letter and spirit," he said, citing examples of some provisions not being followed by the industry.

FSSAI IN NEWS

To improve compliance of food safety law, Agarwal said the FSSAI is modernising food labs across the country and is also ensuring inspection is being done in objective and transparent manner.

"We depend on states' enforcement machineries for compliance of food standards. We are making efforts on capacity building of regulatory staff," he said.

Agarwal said further that the regulator plans to make it mandatory for every food business to have at least one food supervisor and informed that as many as 16 courses have been launched to provide training as well as certificates.

The FSSAI CEO stressed on the need to chalk out a strategy to enhance food safety and hygiene in the un-organised sector.

The FSSAI is also preparing a corporate management index to nudge the food businesses to engage with the government and work towards the overall objective of providing safe and wholesome food to people, Agarwal added.