

Dated: 13.09.2017 (Wednesday)

Page: 08

Use web-based inspection platform, FSSAI tells states

Food safety regulator FSSAI says the platform will ensure that inspections of food businesses are done transparently



New Delhi: In a bid to ensure that Indian food businesses comply with food safety and hygiene standards in an effective and transparent manner, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed states to implement a web-based real-time inspection platform for food safety officers (FSOs). The 'Food Safety Compliance through Regular Inspections and Sampling' (FoSCoRIS) system launched on Monday uses instant geo-tagging, time stamping, real-time data collection and multiple levels of verification and can be used via hand-held devices like mobile phones and tablets.

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The technology will help ensure periodic inspections of food businesses are carried out by regulatory staff on a regular basis in an objective and transparent manner, the food safety regulator said in New Delhi on Monday.

“Such inspections would use standard compliance matrices to ensure consistency in approach of inspections across the country. This would replace the current system of ad hoc and subjective inspections and sampling that are currently carried out by the regulatory staff,” Pawan Agarwal, chief executive of FSSAI, said in an interview. “This would use a nationwide information technology (IT) platform to bring together all key stakeholders—the food businesses, FSOs, designated officers (DOs), state food safety commissioners (FSCs) so that such inspections and sampling is done by maintaining a high level of integrity of the process and the process itself is effectively monitored at various levels. Inspection, sampling and test result data will be shared seamlessly by all officials, right from field level to district, state and national level,” Agarwal said.

FSSAI will develop the FoSCoRIS system and put in place infrastructure required for its operation and maintenance at the national level. The food regulator will provide the devices and reimburse internet charges. During inspection, samples could also be picked and noted. The evidence and traceability will follow, based on the unique ID generated for the sample.

Through FoSCoRIS, details of the food safety officer’s location and the area of FSO will be collected on a real-time basis. Every detail of log-in and log-out time and location will be collected on the central server of the system.

Interestingly, random four-to-five pictures will automatically be captured by the device using the front as well as the rear camera on a mobile phone or a tablet. “The collected data in the system includes geo tags of location, time, date, inspection report and pictures of FSOs and his location. The FSSAI and the State Food Safety Commissioners would be able to monitor each and every inspection on a real-time basis and afterwards as well,” Agarwal said.

The data collected from inspection reports and samples will be analyzed to understand the areas and food products to be focused on, identify hot-spots, trends and pattern in food safety to take corrective measures and for policy interventions. “This will also help assess the performance of field level officers and help improve their efficiency,” said Agarwal.