

PRESS NOTE

From Smart City to Food Smart City

In a unique initiative, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India piloted high-level discussions between national and international experts on an innovative framework to create 'Food Smart Cities' in India. Building on the Ministry of Urban Development's Smart City Mission, Food Smart Cities would include end-to-end solutions for food systems in urban India.

In the multi-stakeholder brainstorming workshop on Food Smart Cities, which was convened jointly by FSSAI and Ministry of Urban Development at FSSAI Headquarters on May 2, 2017, the framework and methodology for rollout of the Food Smart City framework was discussed. Senior representatives from Smart Cities including Ludhiana, Ajmer, Jaipur, Gurgaon and Bhubaneswar participated in this meeting. Several key international partners and academics also joined the meeting to share best practices from around the world. This included Food Foundation from the UK, EAT Foundation from Norway and Sweden, a representative from the Birmingham City Council and Professor Alan Dangour from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Pawan Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI in his opening remarks said that food, like air and water is often taken for granted and has been largely ignored in our city planning, despite it being the central piece around which life revolves. There is now a golden opportunity to integrate food systems management into the smart city guidelines. Looking through the food lens provides city planners many interesting opportunities in developing institutional, social and economic infrastructure to ensure the health and happiness of their citizens through safe and nutritious food.

Cities are engines of growth in India and over 60 cities have a population of over 1 million. This rapid urbanization has led to a number of key issues- namely food sufficiency, food quality and environmental concerns. One of the ways to address this is to integrate sustainable food safety and nutrition systems within the smart city design and create Food Smart Cities. Brent Loken, Science Liason Officer, EAT Foundation informed

the gathering that even internationally, the concept of a Food Smart City is in the initial stages of development and India has the opportunity to play a pioneering role in shifting thinking around this critical issue.

At the workshop, FSSAI proposed a four-pillar approach, with clear actionables, that cities could undertake at the local level to potentially trigger change across the country. This four-pillar approach focused on ensuring safety and hygiene across the supply chain, improving diets, triggering social and behavioral change in consumers and excess food management and food loss recovery. Campaigns, processes and practices around each of these pillars can create a change model for all cities across the country to emulate, and FSSAI has already done substantial groundwork on many of these pillars, which can be implemented in any city aspiring to be a Food Smart City.

Participants left the workshop enthused with ideas and a clear action plan for their city. Anupam Mishra, Economic Advisor to MoUD, suggested including food-based parameters to the livability index that is being developed by MoUD, while Surabhi Malik, Additional CEO of Ludhiana Smart City, said that she was now encouraged to build food into a new citizen collaboration and feedback portal they are developing.

The workshop concluded with a decision that a framework for food smart cities would be further refined and circulated to cities around the country, aspiring to be Food Smart Cities. This is the first time that a holistic approach to food management and city planning is being advocated in the country.