

Press Release

FSSAI pushes for a robust consumer grievance redress system in food sector

Delhi, 31st March, 2017: The Food Safety Regulator on Friday called upon all food business operators in the country to establish a robust, effective and efficient system of redressing consumer complaints in the food sector.

Addressing food business operators at a training programme organized to sensitize them to the rights of consumers, particularly their right to quick and satisfactory resolution of their complaints, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), said the food safety authority would soon come up with a performance metric to accurately evaluate the consumer disputes resolution system of each food business operator. "We want to make sure that no complaint goes unresolved", he said.

Ashish Bahuguna, Chairman, FSSAI, regretted that companies, particularly the larger ones, were prone to complacency when it came to consumer complaints. This has to change, he said. His advice to the corporates was: "Criticism is good-look upon it as a learning experience"

With its increasing focus on consumer rights, particularly their right to safe food and the right to redress of their grievances, the food regulator has provided as many as eight platforms through which consumers can register their complaints, concerns, views and opinions. Besides the toll-free number 1800112100, consumers can Whatsapp their complaints on 9868686868 or SMS their grievances on the same number or send in their concerns to the web portal-Food Safety Connect. They can also contact the food regulator through their Facebook and twitter pages, can e-mail a complaint on compliance@fssai.gov.in or send it by snail mail to the Regulatory Compliance Division, fourth floor, FSSAI, FDA Bhawan, Kotla road, New Delhi-110002 or even walk in to the regulatory compliance division.

Thus, from the time these facilities were set up and now (between June 2016 - February 2017) FSSAI has received as many as 1722 complaints, out of which the maximum number-1307 pertained to food packaging. Another 415 grievances were about parceled packages or take-aways, 98 were about food adulteration and 74 were on sale of expired food packages.

The FSSAI team handling these complaints sifts through them, categorizes them and depending on the nature of the complaint, refers them to the food business operator or the state enforcement agency for appropriate action within the defined timelines. However, a careful scrutiny of the

complaint redress showed that a large number of complaints were pending with the food business operators and the state governments!

So in a bid to correct this and tighten the complaint resolution system, the FSSAI is planning a series of workshops with food business operators as well as state food safety officers. In fact the FSSAI insisted that food business operators nominate nodal officers for redress of consumer complaints and this was the first of a series of workshops planned for such nodal officers.

FSSAI has also taken an initiative to develop a Food Safety Phone Network (FSPN), wherein all food regulatory authorities will be operating in a Closed User Group (CUG) across the country. This network will bring more coherence in the efforts of maintaining food safety standards in the country and also reduce the response time to emerging food safety issues. It will also empower the citizens in a big way as it provides direct access to the regulatory staff. This will bring more transparency in the regulatory process and will provide an effective mechanism for grievance redress.. These CUG numbers will be integrated with Food License & Registration System (FLRS), so that all the alerts generated by FLRS shall be messaged on these CUG numbers.

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