

Govt institutions' mess owners directed to obtain licenses at earliest

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E-paper

FSSAI has directed all the food business operators (FBOs) running canteens or messes at government academic institutions or Central government organisations to get licenses immediately to avoid being penalised according to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. However, the country's apex food regulator has not stipulated a deadline for the same.

A letter in this regard was issued recently by the regulator, referring to an audit undertaken by it about the food quality and safety in several of the government institutions across the country. Garima Singh, director, regulatory compliance, FSSAI, stated in the letter that recently, it undertook the audits of the messes, canteens or cafeterias of 11 Central educational institutions and colleges/universities, finding that while seven of them failed the audits, four were marked for improvement.



Food Safety and Standards
Authority of India

The institutions included the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER).

It was revealed that the general practice of hygiene and sanitary requirements laid down in Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration) Regulations, 2011, were violated. Besides, it was also found that most of the canteens, messes or cafeterias were running businesses without licenses and registrations, while no person could carry on any food business or activity without a valid license.

Singh said, "All such catering units operating in the premises of government institutions fall under the definition of FBOs, and therefore, need to obtain licenses or register, as is applicable." The letter warned that accordingly, such catering services/units, including hostel messes, canteens or cafeterias, if found violating any of the provisions contained in the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, would be subjected to penal action.

And all such FBOs engaged in catering services inside such institutions were directed to immediately apply for licenses or register, and follow the general practices of hygiene and sanitary requirement under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The letter also reiterated that the FSSAI chief can initiate auditing of any such institution once in a year through its own or accredited agency. The state food safety commissioners were also asked to identify such defaulting FBOs and initiate action against them.