



## **FSSAI CEO: People hear adulteration, and think milk is mixed with detergent, urea. That's not the case**

"We have set safety standards for milk to be followed that have been given out to states. Every state has food safety commissioners who are supposed to keep a check on the quality of milk," says Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

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“Adulterants’ is a broad category and even water in milk will be called an adulterant, but that doesn’t mean it is unsafe milk,” says FSSAI CEO.

*Pawan Kumar Agarwal was appointed the chief executive officer of food regulator **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** in 2015. In a telephonic interview with **Smitha Verma**, he talks about the role of the food regulator and how the quality of milk and its safety are being ensured. Edited excerpts:*

### **What role does the FSSAI play in ensuring the quality of milk?**

We have set safety standards for milk to be followed that have been given out to states. Every state has food safety commissioners who are supposed to

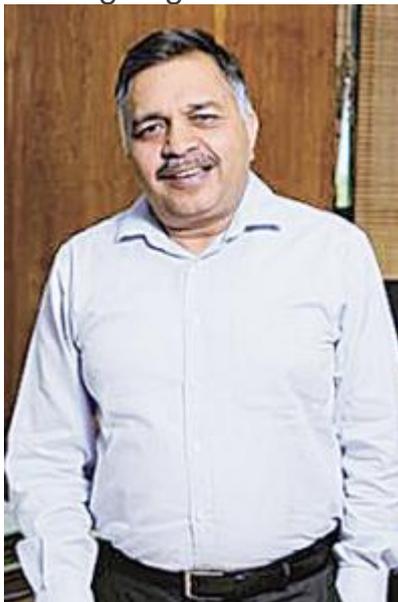
keep a check on the quality of milk. These are skilled personnel who know what measures need to be followed.

### **Why is then there rampant adulteration in packaged milk?**

‘Adulterants’ is a broad category and even water in milk will be called an adulterant, but that doesn’t mean it is unsafe milk. What we have to understand is that there are different kinds of adulterants... like water is a seasonal adulterant, which happens in summer months or during festivals when demand for milk is high. This is more an issue of milk quality rather than unsafe milk.

### **As per a 2012 FSSAI nationwide surveillance survey, the amount of milk found to be adulterated was 68.4%. Your comments...**

There’s some confusion regarding adulterants in milk. It is a matter of misrepresentation. The moment people hear adulteration, they think their milk is mixed with detergent, urea, shampoo or so. That is not the case. Roughly, only 10-12% of milk sold will have adulterants that might pose a safety issue. And most big milk brands follow stringent measures to check adulterants. Even if minute traces of detergent are found in some milk samples, it could be because the milk was stored in a container that contained traces of the detergent left after washing it. And to some extent, those traces must have led to a high figure of 68.4%.



Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

### **So what is the FSSAI doing to change the public perception?**

The last survey had many gaping holes, as different agencies conducted it and the parameters followed were not uniform. So now, we are conducting a new survey, which will be conducted by one agency across the country.

### **Several start-ups are promising farm-fresh or organic milk. What checks and balances are in place for these ventures?**

It is the state government's responsibility to ensure that these enterprises are registered and also the quality of milk being sold follows the standards set up by the FSSAI.