

FSSAI notifies on FSS Act and Good Agricultural Practices to address contaminants

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has written to the state Food Safety Commissioners for a training and awareness programme about the FSS Act and 'Good Agricultural Practices' for the primary producers to address the problem of contaminants and residues of various pesticides post-harvesting.

The state food authorities were asked to include programmes related to agriculture, animal husbandry, pesticide usage and so on.

"It is requested to conduct training and awareness programme about the Act and promotion of 'Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP), Good Animal Feeding Practices (GAFP) etc., apart from integrated pest management, use of pesticides only in the prescribed manner and for approved crops, observance of waiting period prior to harvesting by the cultivators etc. among farmers," reads the letter.

The letter added that the programmes can be arranged in association with state departments of agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

The matter gained prominence after the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health had observed that harmful components and contaminants enter the food system at the time of primary production and asked the food authority to ensure that the food is safe right from the beginning of the food chain, the food authority needs to work closely with the primary producers.

According to the FSSAI, being a food regulator it monitors and regulates the contaminants and maximum residue limits for various pesticides in farm produce once the food enters in the food value chain.

"However, the source of presence of pesticides and heavy metals in food chain are agricultural practices like use and sale of unapproved pesticides to the cultivators, overuse of pesticides beyond the recommended dose, non-following of waiting period and other agronomic practices including integrated pest management and contaminated irrigation water etc.," said an official with the FSSAI.

The official informed that FSSAI has issued various codes of practices under the Food Safety Management System for milk, milk products, fish, fish products, meat and meat products and so on, along with vegetable edible oils.

Besides, the regulator has also issued a number of guidance notes on major food safety issues related to the primary production level regarding metal contaminants, pesticides, aflatoxins and issue of formalin, and all of this material is available on FSSAI's website.