

Alexa, tell the kids to 'eat right': FSSAI

Food regulator FSSAI ties up with Amazon's virtual assistant, Alexa to promote healthy eating habits in children. "A key constituent of the 'eat right' campaign is towards children and to address this audience, there are a number of interventions that are based on pulling in these young minds, rather than pushing out content," said FSSAI CEO

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New Delhi: In a first, the national [food](#) regulator has tied up with [e-commerce](#) giant [Amazon](#)'s virtual assistant [Alexa](#) and is setting up '[eat right](#)' labs in schools, looking to include [children](#) in the dialogue on healthy and safe eating.

"A key constituent of the 'eat right' campaign is towards children and to address this audience, there are a number of interventions that are based on pulling in these young minds, rather than pushing out content," Food Safety & Standards Authority of India chief executive officer Pawan Agarwal said.

The programmes are aimed at reaching youth who use Alexa regularly and to work with schools to deliver meal plans based on eating right, he said.

The move comes after the Central government clamped down on junk foods in schools, banning the sale of packaged foods high in fat, salt and sugar in their canteens, messes, hostel kitchens or within 50 metres of their campuses.

"Millennials are more conscious about their diet. A lot of them live in villages but technology is closing the rural-urban divide. Virtually, they are in the same space as urban consumers and it's aspirational for them to also eat right. We are aware of this," Agarwal said.

FSSAI, the nodal agency under the ministry of health and family welfare, will use technology extensively to drive conversations on safe and healthy food.

“We want this to become a mainstream conversation and we’re using technologies like virtual and augmented reality to bring in school and college students,” he said.

The ‘eat right’ campaign is linked with concepts such as setting hygiene parameters for street vendors and hygiene ratings for restaurants, hotels and cafeterias.

In a related development, [FSSAI](#)’s “clean street food hubs” under which it identified clusters including street vendors, and trained and mobilised them, is being scaled up nationally from 20 such hubs presently. Besides, milk testing and inspection of dairy plants will come into effect starting this month, with penalties for those not adhering to guidelines.

“There is general despair among citizens that food products such as milk, spices and oil are adulterated. We understand there are problems and that’s why we are doing largescale surveillance to understand the nature and extent of the problem so we can address those,” he said. The regulator is hiring 800-plus employees and taking over central licensing enforcement from state governments.