

FSSAI shares Gujarat model in case disposal

By Lakshmi Ajay, Ahmedabad Mirror | Sep 17, 2018



Food inspectors dispose of adulterated food during a drive

Another Gujarat model has been shared for other states to emulate. After the Food and Drug Control Administration (FDCA) brought down the pendency of minor cases by 75 per cent in the past one year, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has taken note of it and has shared how Gujarat did it with all other states.

In an effort that will make food inspectors efficient, save on time, effort and resources, the Food and Drug Control Administration (FDCA) brought down 75 per cent of the over 4,000 pending cases this month. The cases were under PFA (Prevention of Food Adulteration) Act. PFA has been replaced by the Food Safety & Standards Act 2006 (FSSA) that overrides all other food related laws in the country.

“This move will benefit food inspectors to work with more efficiency as a lot of their time, efforts and government funds were going in attending court hearings that can continue from 5 to 25 years. Many a time it so happens that the accused in these cases has either passed away or is not found, but we have to follow up the case. We have close to 100 food inspectors and at times the pendency is so high that one inspector has to follow up 100 such cases in a short career span of 4 to 5 years. The reduction in workload due to disposal of large numbers of cases will enable food safety department to devote more time to ensure safe and wholesome food to citizens and also lessen the burden on judiciary,” said State FDCA Commissioner H G Koshia.

A technical expert committee was formed to segregate pending cases and around 4000 such cases which included pending cases of ‘misbranding but not unsafe’, ‘substandard’ (food) but

not unsafe among others. It examined 4,329 cases and suggested 3,881 cases in respect of food that were 'not unsafe' and could be disposed of with fines only.

"Currently out of 4,095 odd cases, we have cleared 75 per cent of cases with only 900 cases left and we have realised Rs 7.2 crore in fines in the ongoing exercise. FSSAI took cognisance of this initiative but it also shared Gujarat's SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to dispose of cases under PFA Act and other orders repealed by the FSS Act 2006 with all states," Koshia added.

A uniform judicial procedure was developed for disposal of cases under Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA) in tandem with the state health department. Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA) had also held a special sitting last September in all districts of Gujarat regarding disposal of such cases with Judicial Magistrates.

Following this SOP, close to 250 JMFC (Judicial magistrate first class courts) in 33 districts of Gujarat had a special sitting and disposed of 1,200 cases and realised an amount of Rs 1,25,00,000 alone on September 9, 2017.