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FSSAI officials use test kit to check formalin presence in fish

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Fish markets under surveillance of authority for last three weeks

A six-member team from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) led by Designated Officer B. Vijayalalithambigai on Friday stepped up their ongoing drive against use of preservatives such as formalin in fish by raiding the old (wholesale) fish market as well as the new corporation fish market.

During the drive on Friday, the officials used for the first time a Rapid Fluorescent Formalin Kit also known as Spot Test Kit to ascertain the presence of formalin in the fish within a matter of few minutes.

Ms. Vijayalalithambigai told The Hindu that the fish markets have been under the surveillance of FSSAI for the last three weeks and shops selling fish in both the markets are being subjected to checks. The drive is supported by the Fisheries Department.

On Friday, because of the ban on fishing in Arabian sea, there was no arrival of consignments from Kerala and the various varieties of fish that arrived from Rameswaram from Bay of Bengal were subjected to spot test.

The officials using the kit, extracted 1 cm of flesh from the fish and smashed it well before mixing it with a 20 ml diluent and after one or two minutes of observation, the water above the flesh was tested. In the tests conducted on Friday, none of the samples/water went through any colour change (normally water turns yellow if formalin was present), thus indicating that there was no formalin presence in the fish.

Officials also said that fishermen or wholesale dealers inadvertently use formalin as a preservative for the longer shelf life of fish. But, they should realise that presence of formalin will result in irritable sensation while consuming the fish.

Formalin will also trigger allergic reactions, throat pain, stomach upset and above all formalin (normally used for preserving human bodies or parts) will turn out to be a carcinogen triggering cancer.

While vigil is being stepped up and fish traders are being sensitised, the FSSAI officials exhorted people to ensure that the fish after cleaning is repeatedly washed before cooking.