



## Food safety department to set up 5 model fruit, vegetable markets in state

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**Thiruvananthapuram:** In a move to ensure safe and quality fruits and vegetables for the public, the Kerala Commissionerate of Food Safety is gearing up to set up model fruits and vegetable markets in the state.

The Commissionerate has selected five markets run by HortiCorp and Vegetable Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VDPCK) for the model market project. The plan is to upgrade the markets as per the norms set by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The project aims to improve hygienic conditions, ensuring a proper waste management system, making available pesticide-free fruits and vegetables.

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An official said that efforts are already on and a meeting was held with the HortiCorp authorities and VDPCK in this regard. "We have decided to carry out a pre-auditing at these markets with the help of an empanelled agency to assess its current status. We have given direction to VFPC and HortiCorp to get food safety registration and license for distribution and sale outlets operated by them within two weeks," said the official.

The Commissionerate is also planning to launch awareness and training for farmers and food business operators on safe farming practices. "We would be collecting surveillance samples from these markets for a lab test to ensure its safety. The HortiCorp and VDPCK have agreed to give the details of all the outlets operated by them," said the official.

Lack of lab facilities for checking the pesticide levels in fruits and vegetables procured by HortiCorp and VFPC would be a hurdle, according to officials.