

FSSAI to conduct e-inspection of high risk food businesses during lockdown

Wednesday, 08 April, 2020

Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi

The Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to conduct online inspection of premises of such food businesses, which fall under high risk category in order to process their applications for licence/registration. This was a decision taken by the FSSAI to avoid undue delays in processing of applications for licences during the period of lockdown imposed in the country.

Under the FSS Act and licensing regulations thereunder physical verification and inspection is mandatory in certain high risk category food businesses such as meat and dairy. But due to the current prevailing condition of lockdown in view of Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct physical inspection of such units.

“This could delay the grant of licence/registration where licensing authorities decide to have inspection of food units before considering the applications of licence of the FBO, and therefore to avoid delays, it has been decided to consider e-inspection in place of physical inspection. This would help in processing of the application for the licence by the licensing authorities,” says a senior official with the FSSAI.

The order says, “In cases, where licensing or registering authority decides to conduct inspection prior to grant of FSSAI licence/registration certificate, the concerned authority may conduct e-inspection of FBO’s premise i.e ,authority may record observations by the means of videos or images submitted by the concerned FBO.

The mode of submission of videos or images related to inspection during the lockdown situation may be through any possible media available, including live streaming, if possible. Upon receiving satisfactory videos or images of the FBO’s premises, the licensing authority shall further process the application without any delay. The authority can also download and keep the copy of such visuals for future references.”

The order has asked the licensing authorities in the country that during such lockdown period the applications should be processed without much delay as food is an essential commodity. The order also says that the requirement of inspection should be kept bare minimum and such instances should be reviewed by the Commissioner of Food Safety.

However, after return of normalcy, the authority may schedule the inspection of the FBOs to whom licence was granted during the period of lockdown, if required, says the order.