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FSSAI licence: Only 91 home-based food operators registered in district

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Coimbatore: As of November 1, right from maamis frying murukkus for Diwali sales to the Gujarati aunties making teplas based on orders, all home-food sellers must register or get licensed with the food safety department. Three days since the deadline, only 91 home-based food operators have registered or got themselves a licence. But, the food safety department keeping the Covid-19 situation in mind and Diwali coming up, plans to give operators a few more weeks to apply online.

Earlier this year, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) made it compulsory for home-based food business operators to register themselves or apply for a license.

“While people with an annual turnover of less than Rs 12 lakh can apply to register themselves by paying Rs 100 online, people with a turnover of Rs 12 lakh or more need to pay Rs 2,000 per year online and apply for a license,” said designated food safety officer, Dr K

Tamilselvan.

To apply online people can log onto foscos.fssai.gov.in, choose home-made food option and fill the forms. A food safety officer will visit the kitchen within 30 to 60 days of the application being submitted.

“We will inspect their personal hygiene including clean and cut nails, a hand wash and vessel washing facility in the kitchen, wearing of gloves, masks, aprons and hair nets even without covid-19 in the equation, use of safe raw materials like oil, butter and ghee only from labelled containers, ensure they don’t reuse oil, check refrigeration and freezer temperatures and instruct them on colour usage guidelines,” said Tamilselvan. “If there are issues, we will give them time to rectify it,” he said.

To ensure quick compliance, food safety officers will start listing all home-based operators in their area and issue notices to those who are yet to apply for regularization. If it is not done even after a notice has been issued, legal action will be taken against the operator.

Most of the younger, educated home-based food operators welcome the move. “I think it helps us scale up our businesses more easily and will allow us to get on to food delivery platforms. Besides this, it will help many people in the field improve their hygiene,” says home-baker Saranya Balu of Happy Jar. Ayisha Ahamed who makes moplach cuisine dishes under her brand “Spice Coast” got registered even before it was made compulsory. “We saw our business growing and we wanted to register our income from it. The food inspector was impressed with our cleanliness and was easy to work with,” she says.

However, the uneducated small time murukku, laddoo and chappati experts are expected to be people who may find it hard to conform to the new rules.