

## Hotels in Bengaluru to be rated for hygiene, safety

Quality quotient



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Akin to ratings in food aggregator apps like Swiggy or Zomato, that affects customer behaviour and choices, now hotels, restaurants, darshinis, fine dining places, cafeterias and sweet stalls can get a rating from the country's apex food regulator.

On Monday, Karnataka Food Safety Commissioner Manjushree N, held a meeting with around 50 hoteliers and owners of sweet stalls to discuss the implementation of hygiene rating and the right place to eat scheme.

The country's apex food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) hygiene rating scheme is an online transparent rating system, which aims to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat and encourage businesses to improve their hygiene and nutrition standards. Thus reducing the incidence of food-borne illness.

The scheme is on the lines of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in England and Scores on Doors star rating system in Australia.

Under the scheme, food businesses first do a self-assessment and generate hygiene ratings. Then, it is validated by anyone of the 21 hygiene rating audit agencies empanelled with the FSSAI or a food safety officer of the FSSAI.

They generate a separate set of ratings on the basis of their inspections. Food businesses can download and display this.

Food businesses are rated based on food hygiene and safety conditions found at the time of inspection, and given a score between one and five according to their hygiene and food safety compliance.

Among the 21 hygiene rating agencies, four are headquartered in Bangalore — NXG Food Safety Works, HSR Layout; GreenTick Food Private Limited, Whitefield; Prime Certification and Inspection India Pvt Ltd, HRBR Layout; and TUV Inter Cert SAAR, Malleswaram. The Bruhat Bangalore Hotels Association (BBHA) that was a part of the meeting, according to its website, has 1,500 members, 365 cafes and bakeries, 114 fine dining places and 1,021 darshinis as its members.

Expensive ratings

P C Rao, president of the association, told *DH*: "Hygiene rating agencies are expensive. So we have asked the government to do the audit themselves. We have no problem with being audited and rated."

Manjushree told *DH*: "Hygiene rating makes it the right place to eat from consumers' point of view. The audit costs Rs 5,000 to Rs 15,000 depending on the size of the establishment. Only one or two have said this but the majority have agreed. It is their concern. If anybody wants the FSSAI to do the auditing, we will ask our food safety officers to do."

### **What the hygiene rating agencies say**

\* Dr Umakant Dubey, General Manager, Management Certification, Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs at TUV InterCert Saar India, one of the Hygiene Rating Agencies, told *DH* that the reason the scheme hasn't taken off is that hotels are not willing to pay for the audit. "Our audits cost Rs 8,000. We cannot do audits in Rs. 2,000 as it doesn't cover even the travel charges of our auditor. We haven't audited any hotel in Karnataka so far," Dubey said.

\* None of the other three HRAs that this reporter spoke to has been approached by any hotel for an audit.