

FSSAI to host National Eat Right Mela to sensitise people about safety

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With a view to sensitise people about the food safety ecosystem in the country, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is planning to host the first National Eat Right Mela from December 14-16, 2018, at IGNC, India Gate, New Delhi. This was revealed at a press meet on Monday.

Giving details on the event, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, stated that it aimed at making a template for states' FDAs to host such events and take the subject of food safety to masses.

The highlight of the event will be that street food vendors from various parts of the country will be in attendance.

Recognising that street food vending is an important part of the country's food system, Agarwal pointed out that while the mela is the first of its kind, it is expected to become an annual event and get bigger and better each year. It is also expected to be replicated in at least 40 major cities including state capitals across the country through state governments.

Agarwal stated, "Eventually, this mela would become a one-stop-shop for people to know about safe, healthy and local foods, and enjoy the rich culinary heritage of our country. We hope that this public outreach through celebration and entertainment would nudge citizens to become aware of and adopt safe and healthy eating habits."

"Further, it is expected that states would start organising these Eat Right Melas in other cities and towns at the district level taking the message of 'Eat Right India' to each and every citizen of the country," he added.

Speaking at the meet, national coordinator of NASVI Arbind Singh emphasised that in its new avatar, the street food festival is now integrated with the 'Eat Right Mela' and not only celebrated the Indian food culture but also promoted safe and healthy eating through various engaging activities through convergent efforts.

The mela would provide a complete food experience and be an opportunity to know everything one needs to know about safe food and healthy diets, including quick tests for adulterants, health and nutrition benefits of different types of food, dietary advice by experts and more.

It would also allow citizens to engage in conversations with experts such as chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Dr Shikha Sharma, Prof Pushpesh Pant on various subjects related to food. It would

give an opportunity to the people to sample diverse flavours of the country, watch live 'healthy cooking' demonstrations by celebrity chefs such as chef Manjit Gill and chef Rakesh Sethi, and enjoy live music, dance and theatre performances.

Also, as a part of the celebrations of 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, the theme pavilion this year will be on 'Gandhiji, his habits of food and his thoughts on food and nutrition.'

An Indo-Nordic Food Policy workshop focussed on learning from Nordic countries on the reduction of trans fats and salt in the diet, menu labelling, healthy and sustainable diets, is also a part of the mela.

The mela is being held in partnership with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), Delhi State Food Safety Department, NDMC, IGNC (Ministry of Culture) and Tasting India Symposium.

Meanwhile, the mela is inspired by huge response to Swasth Bharat Yatra, a nationwide relay cyclothon that was flagged off from six remote locations on October 16, 2018.

In the first 50 days, the Yatra covered 10,000 km with 225,000 people directly participating and touching lives of another 10 million people. It would converge in Delhi on Republic Day next year.

According to Agarwal, the Yatra is perhaps the world's largest and longest public outreach programme of its kind that is engaging and exciting people in the remotest parts of the country on safe food and healthy diets. He expressed gratitude to states, NCC, NSS, Scouts and Guides, food businesses, professional associations and consumer organisations for their active participation.