

FSSAI to launch Verified Milk Vendor Scheme to register unorganised suppliers

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) plans to write to the GST Council to reduce the tax rate on packaged milk products to zero. The move is part of its efforts to address the issues of safety and hygiene in the unorganised milk products sector.

The food safety authority will also launch the Verified Milk Vendors Scheme to address the issues of quality and safety in raw milk that is supplied directly to consumers by unorganised milk vendors.

Unveiling an action plan for safe and good quality milk and milk products, FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said on Tuesday, “We have noticed that many unorganised players who were earlier selling packed milk products have now begun selling them as open products to avoid GST. “So we plan to write to the GST Council to bring down the rate on packed milk products from 5 per cent to 0 per cent to address hygiene and safety issues.”

The FSSAI plans to take several key measures for increased and targeted testing and surveillance, preventive and corrective actions, and to increase consumers’ engagement as part of the action plan.

Online registration

While all milk vendors are required to register per the Food Safety and Standards Act, only 5 per cent are currently registered. Under the Verified Milk Vendors Scheme, unorganised milk vendors will be able to voluntarily register through an online portal.

They will be provided with a photo identity card, properly calibrated lactometer and training.

“Addressing the issues of quality and safety in the unorganised milk sector is challenging. We also hope to make consumers aware of this scheme so that they ask their milk vendors whether they are verified. We hope to initially get as many as one lakh milk vendors verified under this scheme. Then the scheme will be reviewed,” Agarwal said.

As far as the organised dairies sector is concerned, the FSSAI has already notified a Scheme of Testing and Inspection, under which the players will need to test products throughout the production chain and maintain records of safety and quality parameters.

“This scheme will get enforced from January 1, 2020. And we will use third-party audit agencies to conduct audit on dairy players next year,” Agarwal added.

Precision testing

Meanwhile, the FSSAI is providing State food laboratories with key testing equipment to conduct high-end precision testing as well as rapid testing to check for contaminants such as aflatoxin M1, antibiotics and pesticides, besides determining the quality of milk and milk products.

It has also asked NABL-accredited private food laboratories to complement the testing by State food labs. Additionally, it will work with consumer organisations, specially in smaller cities and towns, for carrying out surveillance activities on milk and milk products.

“Milk and milk products safety and quality is one of the key priorities for the FSSAI and we will be making efforts to address issues impacting the quality and safety of products in this industry,” Agarwal said.

The FSSAI will be closely working with the Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries along with the National Dairy Development Board to enhance awareness among small dairy farmers regarding improved animal husbandry and farm practices, he added.