

## After Aflatoxin M1 alert, Tamil Nadu panel to study milk safety

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Image of milk vendors used for representational purpose (File Photo | PTI)

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CHENNAI: Two weeks after the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s report revealed presence of Aflatoxin M1 - cancer causing substance in milk samples taken from the State for national level survey- the State government has formed a high-level committee for a detailed study.

A highly placed official of health department told 'Express' that the panel comprises officials from food safety, health and animal husbandry departments, Aavin, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) and a few more research agencies.

"The committee will take samples from cattle feed, fodder and milk from across the State and conduct tests for various quality and safety parameters. Besides, checking the presence of Aflatoxin M1 and other toxic contents impact of climatic condition on cattle and regulation of food grain waste disposal will be looked into."

Following this, food safety department has taken milk samples from over 135 milk manufacturing units across the State and sent them to National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

According to the 'National Milk Safety and Quality Survey 2018' released on October 18, by FSSAI, in 88 milk samples out of 551 collected from the State it was found that Aflatoxin M1 level did not comply with permissible limit.

While FSSAI standards prescribes 0.5 PPB (parts per billion) Aflatoxin level in milk and milk products, the toxic content level exceeded permissible limits in the milk samples taken for survey.

A senior veterinarian from Animal Husbandry department said Aflatoxin M1 comes in milk through cattle feed and fodder. "The food grain waste from industries and fodder which are fed to cattle are mostly stored in the open. The feed gets fungal infection when moisture level goes beyond 11 per cent. Subsequently, the fungus gets converted into carcinogen (Aflatoxin) in the cattle and transferred to milk. "

The State produces over two crore litres of milk a day, of which 34 lakh litres are procured by State-owned milk union federation 'Aavin', while the remaining quantity is sold to private companies. The food safety department claims it is yet to get details of brand names of milk samples.