

FSSAI instructs state food authorities to check on milk at festivals

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FSSAI has issued a notice asking the state food authorities in the country to maintain complete surveillance on milk and milk products like khoa, paneer, dahi, etc. during this festive season.

The country's apex food regulator has also given a list of adulterants, along with the notice, wherein it has explained each adulterant and its specific use in milk and milk products, as a reference for the enforcement purpose. The states, meanwhile, are already on high alert and have even started making the necessary arrangements for the same. H G Koshia, commissioner, Food and Drug Control Administration (FDCA), Gujarat, said, "Milk is a commodity which is consumed by each and everyone. During festivals, the adulteration of milk and milk products are always high. In Gujarat, the drive to keep check on the adulteration in milk is continuous. With two Food Safety on Wheels, two mobile vans and on-the-spot detection kits to check various parameters like urea, artificial colours and their quality, the food safety officers (FSOs) are always on the move."

Adding to this, Bhavin Solanki, medical officer of health, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), said, "AMC FSOs are intensively carrying out surveillance on manufacturing, storage and sale of milk and milk products ahead of the festivals, when people in general use these items more. Utmost care is taken by the supervision team to ensure that citizens get safe and standard quality food." He added that they were also taking samples from market and manufacturers to check the quality of sweets and other food articles. The Gujarat administration also is suggesting guidelines to consumers which shall help them before they buy food products during the festivities. H C Kalita, designated officer, Assam commented, "We are in total co-ordination with FSSAI's special drive for milk safety ahead of festive season and are currently checking the food stalls wherein khoa, paneer and curd are being sold. The samples collected by FSOs have been sent to the laboratory for checking, till next week reports are awaited." The FDA in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, is also gearing up for the festival time. Stating the scenario, Sanjay Kumar Pandey, assistant commissioner (food), Bareilly division, UPFDA, said, "For checking milk adulteration, we have come up with sticky layer strips. If the milk put on the strip starts leaving white spots, it is of a sub-standard quality." He added that the state administration was keeping an eye on the milk and milk products. Although it is a routine job, with the festivities round the corner, it is putting extra effort to avoid any untoward incident. The state governments also look up to the awareness campaigns during such time with focusing more on housewives and small shopkeepers by providing ways to check adulteration in milk and its products.

Recently, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, stated there was no alarming situation nationwide, as the majority of milk samples that were found to be safe contained water and also did not have required fat content. However, in contrast, acting on a tip-off by a whistle-blower in Mumbai recently, FDA Maharashtra busted tankers and tempos transporting 9.27 lakh litre of sub-standard milk into Mumbai.

Of the samples tested, 13 were found to be of sub-standard quality as they contained low-quality fats and solid non-fat (SNF). Similar busting of adulterated milk and milk products kept doing the rounds in recent times.