



Milk in India largely safe, quality issue persist: FSSAI

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Milk in India is largely safe, even though quality issues persist, an interim report released by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said on Tuesday.

The report of the National Milk Quality Survey, 2018, FSSAI said is by far the largest systematic study of milk, both in terms of sample size (6,432 samples) and number of parameters.

The study, found that, little less than 10 per cent samples (638) had contaminants (mainly from poor farm practices and quality of feed) that make milk unsafe for consumption, while over 90 per cent of samples were found safe, said FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal while releasing the interim survey.

"Milk in India is largely free from adulterants which render it unsafe for consumption.

The occurrence of such adulterants is statistically insignificant considering the sample size in the survey, he added.

The survey tested for 13 adulterants including vegetable oil, detergents, glucose, urea and ammonium sulphate.

Milk samples were also tested to check level of contaminants like antibiotic residue, pesticide residue and aflatoxin M1.

The FSSAI official, however did not specify samples from which part of the country contained adulterants.

He said the findings will be shared with stakeholders and state governments, and then preventive and corrective action would be taken to further improve the quality of milk in the country.

Agarwal said there is "no concern" at all due pesticides residues. Only 1.2 per cent of the samples failed on account of antibiotics residues above tolerance level and it was mainly due to oxy-tetracycline used to treat animals with bovine mastitis.

The survey found that non-compliance on fat and SNF (solid non fat) quality parameters is higher in raw milk (sourced directly from milkman) than processed milk.

"Non-compliance on quality parameters in processed milk is quite large, even though it is lower than raw milk. This is a matter of concern and needs to be addressed through various measures," Agarwal said.

He, however added that high percentage of non-compliance samples does not suggest that proportionate volume of processed milk is non-compliant.

Agarwal said, the survey provides solid baseline data and a robust framework for continuous monitoring of safety and quality of milk.

"Whereas there should be zero-tolerance to adulteration in milk, concerns of quality due to contaminants need to be addressed over a period of time by taking large scale awareness drive and public education," he said.

In 2011, FSSAI had conducted a quick survey of adulteration of milk through its regional offices. Another milk survey was attempted in 2016 through state food authorities.

Agarwal said the 2011 survey suffered from several drawbacks. It was based on 1,791 samples and focussed mainly on quality parameters rather than safety concerns. Only qualitative analysis was done and the survey did not include parameters related to contaminants.

The 'National Milk Quality Survey, 2018' panned 29 states and 7 union territories and 1,100 towns with population of over 50,000 were covered. It was conducted over about six months (May-October).

Only about 20 per cent of the milk sold in the country is processed milk.

Of the total 6,432, 41 per cent samples were from processed milk.

The milk was tested for residues of 18 pesticides in the survey, and only in one case, the pesticide level exceeded the minimum residue level permitted by FSSAI.

Also, Ammonium sulphate was detected in 195 or 3 per cent of the samples. Currently, FSSAI regulations do not prescribe any limits for ammonium sulphate in milk.