

## How safe is food, milk & water in Tamil Nadu?

The safety meters in food, milk and water are dangerously dipping into a trough way beyond the hazardous mark.



Image used for representational purpose only

Tamil Nadu is on the national food security map for all the wrong reasons. The safety meters in food, milk and water are dangerously dipping into a trough way beyond the hazardous mark.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has said over 45% of food samples taken for study last year in Tamil Nadu were sub-standard, and 12.7% of the samples were adulterated and unsafe for consumption.

A few weeks ago, milk samples from the state showed very high levels of Aflatoxin M1 residues. These are toxins produced by certain fungi found in agricultural crops like maize and peanuts, and are carcinogenic.

In about 6% of the samples, the residues were found to be beyond permissible limits. Feed and fodder are the medium for Aflatoxin M1 that is then carried on to milk. The highest rates of aflatoxin contamination—88 out of 551 samples—were found in Tamil Nadu.

To make matters worse, Chennai has failed the tap water test too. The Bureau of Indian Standards recently tested the quality of tap water from around 20 state capitals. The Tamil Nadu capital was among the 13 cities that flunked the test.

All 10 samples from Chennai failed to comply with BIS standards over nine parameters, including fluoride levels, turbidity and coliform. The reason for this was attributed to the limited water supply for Chennai due to the drought conditions.

But the fact remains that Tamil Nadu and its capital have performed dismally. And since the city has been in the news for its toxic air too, perhaps there should be a statutory health warning that says, "Don't eat, don't breathe, and don't drink water or milk in Chennai."

The government officials should start cleaning up their act now; we owe at least that much to the next generation. Regulatory authorities, who are also consuming the same poisoned buffet, need to be more vigilant and transparent. It is time they ensure that there is no poison on our plates and in our glasses.