



TN is good: Implementing food safety norms

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File photos of artificially coloured fruits and vegetable examined by food safety officials across Chennai. (DC)

CHENNAI: Though Tamil Nadu is among the 10 states that have performed well on the enforcement of food safety rules, the state was the worst performer in terms of “unsafe food” and “labelling defects.”

Even as the adulteration in milk rocks the state, official figures indicate that TN tops with 12.7 per cent share of unsafe samples in the country. Assam (8.9 per cent), Jharkhand (8.8), West Bengal (7.6) and Odisha (6.7 per cent) are among the top states with unsafe samples. When it comes to labelling defects in samples, TN accounts for the highest share of 18.5 per cent, followed by Jammu and Kashmir (17.8) and Punjab (15.6 per cent).

During 2018-19 fiscal, a total of 1,06,459 samples were analysed. While 3.7 per cent of these samples were found to be unsafe, 15.8 per cent were found to be sub-standard and 9 per cent samples had labelling defects. While, there should be zero tolerance to unsafe food, issue of sub-standard and labelling defects require greater efforts on capacity building of food businesses and food standards as well as labelling requirements.

Bad: Labelling defects accounts for 18.5%

There has been a 7 per cent increase in the number of samples analysed during 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18. It is said 25 per cent more samples were found non-conforming compared to the previous year. This shows that there has been better targeting of enforcement efforts by States/UTs in the country, according to the data released by Food

Regulator, Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). There has been 36 per cent increase in civil cases launched and a 67 per cent increase in the number of cases where penalties were imposed. The amount of penalty imposed has increased by 23 per cent during 2018-19 compared to the previous year. A total amount of `32.58 crore has been realised during 2018-19.

According to Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, more rigorous enforcement by states was essential to build public trust in food. He admitted that public trust has been eroded in recent times due to fake news creating widespread perception of large-scale adulteration in the country.

“FSSAI is working with states and UTs, particularly with weaker ones in this regard. For this, FSSAI is increasing the capacity of State food laboratories and enabling use of private food labs for testing food samples. Enforcement efforts have to be better targeted and preceded by surveillance efforts to identify hotspots and problem areas,” he said.