

Clean Street Food Hub project in limbo

Space constraint cited as major impediment for implementation; vendors operating from encroached spaces make it tougher

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Thanks to the delicacies offered at affordable rates, street-food is a booming business in the state. To ensure that vendors maintain quality and hygiene in the food served, the State Food Safety Department (FSD) in February had decided to initiate a Clean Street Food Hub project. However, eight months later, the project is still in limbo. Safe food street is a concept of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and is a hub of 50 or more vendors, shops and stalls selling popular street food comprising more than 80 per cent local and regional cuisines.

CLEAN STREET FOOD

Clean Street Food Hub project is a concept of FSSAI

It aims to upgrade existing food streets and provide safe and hygienic local eating experiences

The parameters include personal hygiene of food handlers, location and facilities, cleaning and sanitation, water supply and quality, pest control, leftover and waste disposal



Prospective spots identified in state for the project

Shankhumukham and Varkala beach areas in Thiruvananthapuram

Alappuzha beach area

Fort Kochi in Ernakulam

Kottayam

Kozhikode beach area

“Space constraints are a major impediment for implementing the project. Also, the convergence of various departments will have to be ensured before rolling it out. Thus, the implementation of the project in the state might take some more time,” said a Food Safety officer.

According to the officer, at present, a majority of street food vendors operate from encroached spaces which belong to the Public Works Department and Tourism Department. Therefore, it is a risky affair to invest in them.

“The project involves a large sum of money. Suppose, FSD provides them with training and infrastructural facilities for setting up a cluster and then they get evicted by authorities concerned, the investment and effort will go down the drain. Hence, coordination of various departments is a must,” added the officer. At the same time, another officer with the Commissionerate of Food Safety said that as the project is a Centre-sponsored one, FSSAI had given its approval for setting up three hubs in Alappuzha, Shankhumukham and Kozhikode and even sanctioned an amount of `10 lakh each for the same.

“FSSAI even dispatched equipment, including cutting boards, dustbins, stainless steel knives and other utensils for the three hubs. But as the project is in limbo, all of it has been dumped at the commissionerate,” said the officer.

When asked about this, Sabu P C, administrative officer at the commissionerate and also the nodal officer for Clean Street Food Hub project, told TNIE, “It might be out of misconception that street-food vendors aren’t quite in sync with the project. In Alappuzha, we had provided vendors with classes and fitness/medical certificates, with the help of the district administration. But nothing materialised afterwards as they backtracked from the same.”

According to sources, the State-Level Advisory Committee on Food Safety, chaired by the chief secretary, which convened last week discussed the impediments associated with the launch of the project. It was then decided that a convergence of 10 to 12 departments was required along with better coordination between FSD, Tourism Department, LSG Department, KWA, KSEB and others.