

FSSAI gives nod to 30 rapid food testing kits across six categories

Thursday, 02 January, 2020

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FSSAI has announced the introduction of new rapid food testing devices/kits for detection of food-borne pathogens and toxins. It has approved 30 rapid food testing kits/devices across six product categories, i.e., edible oils, milk, water and alcoholic beverages, meat and meat products, fish and fish products and raw and finished products, and an automated system for rapid detection of pathogens in food matrices.

The country's apex food regulator, in a statement, said that these devices will ensure faster, better and cheaper real-time testing of food. These are expected to become an integral part of quality assurance/quality control programmes in the food industry, and also for regulatory and surveillance purposes in 2020.

It is pertinent to mention here that FSSAI recently issued a tender notice to purchase smart food safety jackets. One of the objectives of such jackets was to have provisions for keeping such rapid testing kits for faster results.

Meanwhile, in 2019, FSSAI had finalised the regulations for approval of rapid testing devices, kits and methods to strengthen the food testing ecosystem in the country.

FSSAI is also providing these kits/devices to the state governments for use by field officers and get quicker and validated results for tests conducted on different food products, such as milk and edible oils, amongst others.

Only two out of 30 rapid kits/ devices, however were indigenously manufactured, rest are all imported, despite the fact that many research and scientific institutions are engaged in development of such kits and devices.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, informed that steps have been initiated to make these devices available on government eProcurement marketplace (GeM) portal so that further procurements can be made by governments and local bodies on their own. FSSAI has invested over Rs 5 crore on this project so far.

"FSSAI would spend over Rs 20 crore and procure rapid food testing kits and devices. These would be provided to field officers through the state governments. We hoped that various states would also buy such kits/devices from the GeM portal to make them widely available with the enforcement officials," he added.

“Once, such kits and devices are widely used for regulatory purposes; food industry would also begin to use them for internal quality assurance and quality control purposes,” Agarwal said, adding that there was a market potential of Rs 1,000 crore for such kits/devices in India alone.

He hoped that wider use of rapid food testing kits and devices for food testing would be a game-changer for India in 2020, and build greater public confidence in food available in the marketplace.

Also, the regulator has initiated steps so that indigenously developed kits/devices are validated and approved under its regulations on a fast-track basis.

It informed that work has begun on 30 of these kits/devices which will be for six product categories including fish and fish products, edible oils, salt, meat and chicken products, milk and milk adulteration, and cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables and beverages.