

THE HINDU

Now, check quality of packaged water online

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FSSAI uploads details of registered suppliers with quality parameters, lab reports

Consumers can now check the quality of the packaged drinking water supplied to them in a matter of minutes.

The website, hosted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), provides details on most of the licensed manufacturing units across the State. There are 1,375 packaged drinking water units across Tamil Nadu. Of these, nearly 1,032 units have so far registered their details on www.safewater.fssai.gov.in.

With just an FSSAI licence number or BIS licence number found on bubble tops, consumers can now check complete information about the water quality. Details, including lab reports, about when the unit was started and various parameters tested for water quality, have been uploaded online.

Voluntary registration

Officials of the FSSAI said that at present the registration of packaged drinking water units was voluntary and that they needed to have licences both from FSSAI and the Bureau of Indian Standards to operate their units. "We are approaching the remaining units in the State through field officers. Results of the samples taken by FSSAI teams are available online," said an official.

In Chennai, 22 of the 24 operating units, have registered. "We are creating awareness among people about the facilities available to check water quality and register complaints about the poor quality of packaged drinking water," the official said.

On an average, nearly 40 crore litres of packaged water is sold daily in the State and Chennai and its suburbs consume one-third of the supply.

FSSAI had launched a complaint number — 9444042322 — a year ago, to facilitate registration of complaints by the consumers. Of the 4,368 complaints received in the past one year till August, 133 were related to packaged drinking water.

In a bid to increase awareness about access to safe drinking water and the significance of registering complaints, the FSSAI has been putting up stickers in commercial places and food joints, displaying the helpline number.

There are plans to put up about 6,000 posters in public places to seek consumers' attention towards the issue. FSSAI teams would take action on the complaint and resolve them within 24 to 48 hours, officials said. If the complaint recurs, FSSAI has the power to close down the unit, they added.

Though it was a welcome initiative to regulate the licensed industry, V. Murali, founder, Greater Tamil Nadu Packaged Drinking Manufacturers Association, said the FSSAI must focus on shutting down unlicensed manufacturing units that supply a sizeable volume of water. Awareness must be created among consumers about such units that do not conform to norms, he added.