

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **Now, food quality can be tested in government-designated laboratory free of cost**

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NEW DELHI: Unsure about quality of your food? You can now get the sample tested in a government-designated food laboratory free of cost. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has authorised voluntary consumer organisations (VCOs) to assist consumers in getting such tests done and also waive the existing fee for it.

At present, the food safety law provides for reimbursement of testing fees only if a consumer sample fails. However, the regulator feels the fees is a factor why consumer hesitate to bring samples for testing.

FSSAI said provisions have now been introduced to reimburse testing fees even if the consumer sample does not fail.

The food regulator has authorised 80 VCOs to facilitate the testing process. These organisations will create a nationwide network of consumer organisations for food safety and nutrition (NetCOFaN) with the support of FSSAI. These consumer organisations will be linked to identified labs and tests will only be done at those labs, the regulator said.

The network will also use content on food safety and nutrition by FSSAI with their ground level contacts for awareness and training programmes by localizing it.

On-ground presence of VCOs will help take messages to local areas across the country. Support of VCOs will also be taken to mobilize small and petty food businesses to participate in hygiene rating, cluster certification and food safety training and certification programmes, FSSAI said.