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Press Release

FSSAI goes Global: Strengthens its Global Outreach

New Delhi, 11th September 2018: With a view to benchmark country's food standards with global standards and learn the best practices from established food systems in other countries, India's food regulator has expanded its outreach in recent years. Currently, a high level delegation from FSSAI led by its CEO, Mr. Pawan Agarwal is visiting several countries in Europe to strengthen its ties with European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. Mr. Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI has also been invited to speak at a high level technical workshop on food safety and healthy diets on 12th September organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at Vatican. This workshop is being held to provide insights and perspectives to contribute to the FAO-WHO International Food Safety Conference (IFSC) next year in 2019.

FSSAI already has cooperation agreements with Germany, France, New Zealand, Denmark and Portugal. Similar agreements with Netherlands, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Nepal, Afghanistan and Japan are on the anvil. In addition, FSSAI works closely with the United States, Canada, UK and Singapore. Key areas of cooperation with the advanced countries are around risk assessment and building capacity of lab personnel. Earlier FSSAI had benefitted immensely under the EU capacity building initiative for trade and development.

Further, FSSAI works very closely with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), an intergovernmental body of the United Nations, established by FAO and WHO in 1962. It develops harmonized international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of the consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. India is a member of Codex since 1964. FSSAI is the National Codex Contact Point (NCCP) for India. Currently, India is also the Coordinator for FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA), which is one of the Regional Coordinating Committees of Codex.

Last week, FSSAI in partnership with the Secretariat of CAC organized a technical workshop for the Codex Contact Points (CCPs) of Codex member countries from Asia. Around 45 Participants from 18 Asian Countries participated in this workshop. The activities covered under the two-day workshop titled "*Effective preparation for participation in Codex*" focused around supporting skills and knowledge development, to increase practical capacity and ability of staff working in national Codex structures and to operate successfully in the Codex international standard setting environment. The participants from the National Codex structures were trained on the use of electronic systems and tools including the new Codex website; Online Commenting System (OCS) and digital platform for Electronic Working Groups (EWG). The above activities are envisaged to support the direct contribution of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to some of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The participants are expected to further enhance their skill set for working in National Codex structures and transfer the knowledge to peers at the national level in their respective geographies.

While the exposure of Indian participants to the modern IT tools used by Codex goes a long way in strengthening India's participation in the Codex standard setting process, the information and experience gained in this workshop also provides an opportunity to upgrade our systems in line with the Codex best practices and thereby making our regulations' development process more efficient and effective.

Providing leadership for food safety in Asia, FSSAI had also organised an interactive session between delegates from Asian countries and the leadership of Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) at FSSAI office on 5th September, 2018. The Asian delegates got an opportunity to interact and discuss the food

safety ecosystem in the region. The need for developing countries to embrace a coherent food safety policy framework, to make smarter investments and ensuring more effective regulatory and program delivery was stressed to avoid rising public health and economic cost from unsafe food. The works carried out by GFSP in African region and China was highlighted. In recognition of India's support and keen participation in its activities, CEO, FSSAI has been invited to the Governing Council of the GFSP. It may be noted that India has benefitted immensely from its partnership with GFSP over the past couple of years in terms of building capacity of India's food lab personnel in using advanced techniques in food analysis through training in Singapore and the United States. FSSAI along with Export Inspection Council (EIC) is now setting up an International Training Centre on Food Safety and Nutrition in Mumbai with the support of GFSP. This would be inaugurated in the last week of October, 2018 on the side-lines of the 19th World Congress on Food Science and Technology being organised for the first time in India from 23rd to 27th October, 2018 in Mumbai.

In the Asian region, earlier this year FSSAI had coordinated efforts for preparing a joint application of Bhutan, India and Nepal for support under the Codex Trust Fund initiative of the FAO-WHO. The joint application envisaged carrying out individual and joint activities of interest to the countries which will help them to develop and operate National Codex structures for effective participation in Codex works. Globally, it was the only joint application submitted by a group of countries and approved by the Codex Trust Fund Steering Committee.

Overall, India is not only strengthening its food safety ecosystem and learning from countries that have matured systems for food safety but also supporting and providing leadership to the developing nations particularly in Asia that have begun to set up systems for food safety.

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