

“Report on study cum field visit of FSSAI Delegation to Germany from 12th June, 2016 to 17th June, 2016”

Joint Statement of Intent (JSI) have been signed between the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) and Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Germany and FSSAI on cooperation in Food Safety on 05th October, 2015. The objective of the JSIs signed is to develop and maintain bilateral cooperation that will be based on the mutual interest between the German Agencies and FSSAI in the sphere of their respective competence and according to their capacities in the field of food safety and risk management and to improve the cooperation in the field of food safety and to protect the health and safety of consumers in both countries.

To enhance the understanding, German Agencies BVL and BfR invited a delegation from FSSAI to come to Germany on a study cum field visit. Accordingly, the following four officials viz Ms. Madhavi Das, CMSO; Shri R.K. Gupta, Head (Quality assurance), Dr. Ajay Garg, Assistant Director (imports) and Shri Abhishek Lall, Assistant Director (International Cooperation) were nominated to visit Germany from 12th June, 2016 to 17th June, 2016.

Structure of Food Safety Network in European Union and Germany

(Details may please be referred at Annexure 1)

In European Union and Germany, the three functions related to food safety i.e. assessment, legislation and management are handled as under:

Risk Assessment function is handled in European Union by EFSA (European food Safety Authority) while the same is done in Germany by BfR (Federal Institute of Risk Assessment). In German Landers (States) the assessment is done by Public Control Authorities like LAVES.

The Legislation function in European Union is performed by EU Commission (Directorate General for Health and Food Safety). In Germany, BMEL (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture) controls the Legislation function while the Lander ministries control the same in states.

The Management function is controlled by FVO (Federal and Veterinary Office) in EU while BVL (Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety) controls the same in Germany. The Federal Government/Lander Working Groups controls the same in States.

Date wise Report of the FSSAI delegation study visit to Germany

12th June, 2016

Ms. Ursula Holzhauser, Counselor, German Embassy and Mr. Friedemann Kraft from BVL briefed the delegation about the featured program and expectations from this visit. This certainly helped the delegation to prepare for the coming days.

13th June, 2016 - Visit to BfR, Federal Institute of Risk Assessment

The delegation went to BfR (Federal Institute of Risk Assessment) where we were welcomed by Prof. Dr. Dr. Andreas Hensel, President, BfR and other BfR officials. Thereafter Dr. Hensel started introductory presentation from 09:25 A.M. Dr. Hensel explained functions, structure, role and budget of BfR. It was informed that the public health safety has evolved since 1876 into various agencies which finally become BfR in November, 2002. It is a statutory public institute within the portfolio of BMEL (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture), Germany. BfR advises German Government agency within the legal framework. The other officers from BfR also delivered their presentation on respective expertise including nano-technology amid interactive discussions from the delegation. Many issues emerged and discussed regarding how they are assessing risk and how India can develop the same.

After that we visited BfR labs where we visited microbiology labs and saw Campylo-Bacter culture and isolation and various modern microbiology instruments and techniques which BfR is following for testing and research. After that one veterinarian of the institute led the delegation to animal house, small slaughter house and small meat products processing unit.

13th June, 2016 – Visit to BVL, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety

The delegation also visited BVL (Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety) the same day which was centrally located in Berlin. As we reached BVL, Dr. Helmut Tschiersky, President, BVL welcomed the delegation along with other BVL officials. The discussion in the conference room started where Dr. Tschiersky delivering the introductory presentation on BVL. Dr. Petra Gowik, Head of Standards and Labs, BVL gave presentation on mode of operation on official labs. Dr. Ramona Lichtenhaeler, Head of the Data Management and Data Analysis Department gave presentation on data and information management. Dr. David Trigo, Expert Veterinarian, BVL briefed the delegation on RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) and RAPEX (Rapid Alert system for non-food Products). The discussion was very interactive and useful. The delegation shared the

developments in FSSAI and the problem we are facing. BVL officials assured the delegation of extended cooperation and help for setting up of the improved food safety structure in FSSAI.

14th June, 2016 – Visit to Hamburg Port

The delegation left for Hamburg where we saw Border Inspection Post. At the port of Hamburg, we were welcomed by Dr. Ute Gramm. Officials gave detailed presentations on imports of food. We have an interactive discussion. After the discussion both parties understood clearly the system of imports of each other.

Then we left for port area where we saw the visual inspection and sampling of one consignment of honey. They let us saw various articles of food samples which were collected earlier for testing. We discussed the FSSAI procedure of regulating imports.

15th June, 2016 – Visit to Wholesale Fruit Market in Hamburg

At early morning at 05:30 A.M. the delegation visited wholesale food and vegetable market in Hamburg. There we were welcomed by Mr. Frank Muller from BLE (Federal Office for Consumer and Food) and Mr. Matthias Wegner, Deputy Manager, Gross market Hamburg. They showed us the wholesale market of vegetables fruits and flowers.

15th June, 2016 – Visit to LAVES (Lower Saxony State Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety), Oldenburg

Afterwards the delegation moved to Oldenburg of Lower Saxony State and reached LAVES at 01:00 P.M. where Prof. Dr. Eberhard Haunhorst, President, LAVES welcomed the delegation and delivered detailed presentation including the structure of LAVES.

It was informed that the LAVES was established in July, 2001 and is responsible for monitoring, surveillance and analysis functions. The Landers (States) does both the Risk Assessment and Risk Management in Germany. LAVES also works in some panels of

European Food Safety Agency (EFSA). LAVES was founded with the objective to determine health risks for consumers at onset, as well as to efficiently and promptly fight them. In LAVES, more than 800 employees are engaged in consumer protection. Major tasks of LAVES comprises consulting and service tasks, execution tasks and analysis. This includes the execution of all official testing of food, feed, animals and daily consumption goods, to control feed companies, veterinary drug surveillance, approval of food and feed companies, market control and ecological structure and the consultation and support of local Government authorities in food surveillance, animal health and animal welfare. In addition, LAVES is a company training center and educational training centre for technical's of food area.

16th June, 2016 – Visit to Meat Processing Company, Geestland

The Meat Processing unit informed that they have their own parents flocks whom farmers nurture and feed to develop healthy and disease free chicks. The plant was fully automated with approximately 40,000 turkey birds processed daily. They themselves provide all facilities including antibiotic free feed, salmonella de-contaminated feed, veterinary service to farmers. They have their own sewage purification unit and biofilter for odour and dust free environment. The veterinarian experts are already posted in this plant for controlling whole process of slaughtering. The production is 95% fresh and only 5% is frozen meat products. LAVES makes inspection once a year and gives certification and accreditation.

16th June, 2016 – Visit to AniCon Labor GmbH Private Laboratories, Hoeltinghausen

Dr. Martin Liman, MD of the AniCon labs welcomed the delegation. The discussion started with the introductory presentation where it was informed that the Laboratory was founded 11 years ago in 2005 and is fully independent. Their main focus is on poultry and swine. They generate flock specific autogenous vaccine. No veterinarian working with the AniCon labs works with the farms, so no real competition to their core customer group arises. The staff includes 7 veterinarian, 7 biologists, 2 bio-chemists and 4 biotechnologists.

17th June, 2016 – Visit to BVL (Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety) and BMEL (Federal Ministry of food and Agriculture)

Mr. Niklas Schulze Icking, Dr. Evelyn Breitweg-Lehmann, Dr. Dennis Raschke from BVL and Dr. Benedict Naarmann from BMEL welcomed the delegation.

Mr. Niklaus explained the food safety structure followed in Germany and overall objective of food safety legislation and how the federal states monitor from farm to fork and how the control and inspection is done along the food the chain. Dr. Soumaya Lhafi from BVL explained the lab structure. There is common portal where each Lander (State) posts its information to BVL and connects with each other. Mr. Niklas informed that there are 16 Consumer Protection Centre in each Lander. Dr. Evelyn Breiweg-Lehmann gave presentation on Nutraceuticals and Health claims. It was informed that the focus in claims is on plants and plant parts, reduction of disease risk claims and claims referring to children's development and health. Only authorized claims can be used while the other health claims are forbidden. Formal and Legal Assessment of the claims is done by the Member States and Scientific Assessment is done by EFSA.

17th June, 2016 – Visit to Frankfurt Airport Customs Perishable Centre

The delegation moved from Berlin to Frankfurt in the evening and reached Frankfurt Airport customs perishable centre at 06:30 P.M. where we were welcomed by Mr. Martin Kerber, Head of Division, PPS Hessen and Mr. Andreas Scarnhorst, Deputy acting Manager, Frankfurt Customs Centre. They told about the plants health and import checks at FRA objective of which was to prevent the introduction and spread of pests, diseases to plants, plant products.

Steps of Plant health check at Frankfurt Customs Airport

1. Registration/login into pgz-online by company
2. Application for import, binding registration of regulated plants/produce by company
3. Data check, completeness check by authorized inspector
4. Physical plant health check by authorized inspector and in lab if it is suspicious
5. Release/rejection
6. Subsequently customs clearance

After the insightful presentation, the delegation was led to the perishable centre where the delegation witnessed their checking, sampling and quarantine procedure of fruits and vegetables. The inspecting officer was carrying a tablet at perishable centre and can have the details of the consignment with online access which helps in real time clearance of the consignment. The visit ended at around 10:00 P.M.

Actionable Points

1. Utilization of the expertise of German Authorities to establish FSSAI Risk Assessment Cell.
2. To develop online Risk Alert System
3. To make our labs equipped with upgraded technology and with more testing facilities
4. Inter linkage of our 98 notified labs, 14 Referral Labs and 72 State Labs and exchange of data between these labs and FSSAI.
5. Strong Data Management System
6. Training on demand and need basis from BVL
7. Modern sampling tools to be bought
8. Establishing risk based sampling and improvement in method of sampling
9. To develop Hygiene Regulations and Standards in FSMS
10. To develop traceability of the plant and animal food from farm to plate and from stable to table
11. Use of tablets at the import ports and warehouses in India.

Annexure 1

Structure of Food Safety Network in European Union and Germany



Basic principles of food safety in Germany

