



Eat Right India:

Steadily Reforming India's Food Eco system

Safe foods and healthy diets are critical in the context of India's rising burden of food borne diseases, under-nutrition, micro-nutrient deficiencies and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like hypertension, diabetes, heart related diseases, etc. According to the Burden of Disease study, 6 of the top 10 risk factors for burden of disease in India are food-related. The economic cost of foodborne illnesses is estimated at 0.5% of the GDP.

Shri Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI.

This year's World Food Safety Day theme "Safer food, Better Health" is rightly set to draw attention and mobilize action to prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks and improve human health. The call to action on this year's World Food Safety Day is a reminder that everyone including policy makers, food businesses, educational institutions and workplaces, and consumers play a role in keeping food safe. It emphasises on the need to prioritize food safety throughout the supply chain, from farm to table.

Food safety is one of the determinant of a sound and cohesive healthcare system in a country.

Safe food is essential to promoting human health and well-being and ending hunger, two of the 17 main UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This underlines the need to focus on preventive healthcare through ensuring safe, healthy and sustainable food for all people. It is in this context, that the 'Eat Right India' movement has been launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and habits of food and nutrition, the movement is envisioned as a transformative large-scale



change initiative that combines regulatory, capacity building and empowerment approaches judiciously to protect and advance public health and improve quality of life of all people. Right food is the foundation for better life and its tagline, 'sahi bhojan behtar jeevan' (right food, better life) says it all. The movement is based on three key pillars of, 'Eat Safe, Eat Healthy and Eat Sustainable'. Envisioned as a low cost, high impact collaborative and partnership based preventive health care strategy to promote consumption of safe and wholesome food, it requires interventions on both supply-side and demand-side, taken up together in a campaign mode. As foodborne illnesses and various diet-related diseases cut across all age groups and all sections of the society, the movement brings together food-related mandates of the agriculture, health, and environment ministries, and adopts an integrative or 'whole of the government' approach. Further it builds on synergies with flagship programmes like Ayushman Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission,

POSHAN Abhiyaan and Fit India movement to institutionalise preventive healthcare as a way of life.

A series of initiatives aimed at improving food quality and safety have been launched under the aegis of Eat right India targeting both supply and demand side. To build capacity of food businesses, FSSAI initiated 'Food Safety Training and Certification' (FOSTAC) – a unique program to ensure that there is a trained and certified Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) on each food business premises. Given the large unorganized food sector in India comprising a range of food businesses from street food vendors, dhabas, eateries, etc., several benchmarking and certification schemes to improve food safety and hygiene standards are in place. These involve training of food handlers and audits of food businesses by third-party audit agencies. Schemes such as 'Clean Street Food Hub', 'Clean and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Markets', 'Eat Right Station' and 'BHOG

(Blissful Hygienic Offering to God) for Places of Worship' are targeted to clusters of vendors. For individual outlets such as restaurants, catering establishments, sweet and meat shops, the 'Hygiene Rating Scheme' has been introduced.

Additionally, to create a culture of healthy eating habits across different settings like schools, workplaces, educational institutions, hospitals, etc., Eat Right School and Eat Right Campus certification programs have been launched. Under these initiatives, certification is awarded based on compliance to pre-defined benchmarks on safe, healthy and sustainable diets across these settings.

FSSAI uses various tools and mediums to create awareness about eating right. To celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', FSSAI is organizing "Eat Right Walkathon and Eat Right Melas" in 75 cities across India to commemorate 75 Years of India's Independence. The events are aimed for massive outreach to propagate the message of safe, healthy and sustainable diets. It promotes millets as a nutri-cereal, local & seasonal produce and variety of healthy oils for optimal health and nutrition. The event kick-started in August 2021 and 26 such events has been organized so far.

FSSAI also releases 'Myth Busters' and 'Guidance Notes' for consumers from time to time to address any growing concerns related to food and clarify misconceptions at large. In addition to this, a pool of information including Pink Books for the Home Kitchens, the yellow books for schools, the Orange Books for the campuses, etc., have been developed with the help of experts, nutritionists, doctors and chefs. The Eat Right Toolkit has been developed for Health and Wellness Centers under the Ayushman Bharat to ensure message reaches the grassroots level.

For mass consumer awareness and bringing about a shift in eating behaviours, emphasis has been placed on encouraging healthy food choices. FSSAI launched the "Aaj Se Thoda Kam"

mass awareness campaign to reduce salt, fat and sugar in diets, and Trans-Fat Free India@75 to eliminate trans-fats by 2022. Apart from this, FSSAI promotes a variety of foods considering the vast diversity in diet, culture, customs, etc. for wholesome nutrition. Citizens are nudged to make the right food choices and promote diet diversification with a variety of whole grains ranging from wheat and rice, which are commonly consumed, to millets and other indigenous grains for better nutrition. Large-scale fortification of 5 staples including rice, wheat flour, edible oil, milk and salt with micronutrients appear to be good vehicles to deliver nutrients to large sections of the population. Nudging consumers to eat right not only creates awareness but constantly reiterates the importance of 'mindful' eating to ensure a sustainable change in habits.

To empower consumers to address adulteration, FSSAI has introduced The DART Book to check common food adulterants at home with simple tests. In addition, FSSAI has also launched mobile food testing vans, called Food Safety on Wheels (FSWs) to reach remote areas and conduct training and awareness activities as well.

To encourage and support sustainable food practices to protect the environment, FSSAI is spearheading initiatives such as 'Jaivik Bharat' for easy identification of authentic organic food; 'Save Food, Share Food' to reduce food waste and promote food donation; 'Safe and Sustainable Packaging in Food and Beverage Sector' to reduce the use of plastics and Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) for safe and healthy use of cooking oil and repurposing used cooking oil to make biodiesel/soap, etc.

The Eat Right India targets people across ages, gender, regions, and socioeconomic groups. With the joint efforts of all stakeholders in the food systems from production to consumption, the Eat Right India movement can go a long way in addressing the issues around food safety and nutrition in the country.