



## EatSmart Cities Challenge

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in association with the Smart Cities Mission under the aegis of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) recently announced the winners of the EatSmart Cities Challenge. The 11 winning cities include Chandigarh, Indore, Jabalpur, Jammu, Panaji, Rajkot, Rourkela, Surat, Sagar, Tumkuru and Ujjain. These cities have now entered into the scale up stage of the challenge wherein the projects undertaken at the pilot stage will be scaled up in a sustainable manner.

*Shri Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI.*

Launched in March 2021, the EatSmart Cities Challenge aims to motivate 'Smart Cities' to develop and execute a plan that supports a healthy, safe and sustainable food environment through adoption of various Eat Right India initiatives. The cities were required to implement an action under each of five action areas - Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses and Surveillance Drives; Benchmarking and Certification; Changing settings in schools

and campuses; Creating a Sustainable Food Environment; Behaviour Change Campaigns, over a five-month implementation phase. A total of 108 cities had registered in the challenge out of which 20 cities were shortlisted for evaluation by an external jury panel comprising of national and international experts. Upon evaluation, 11 cities were selected as winners for the next phase of scale up.



In the pilot stage of the Challenge, significant improvements were made in the overall food ecosystem across the cities. Some of the key highlights include:

- At least 10% increase in licensing and registration of food businesses across cities.
- Banning use of plastics and replacing with nature-based alternatives such as 'patravali' or leaf-based cutlery/ utensils.
- Use of technology-based solutions for food safety initiatives.
- Campaigns featuring cartoon/comic characters and video games to encourage young people to make healthy food choices.
- Incorporating food policy into the city urban development plan.
- Healthier food campaigns highlighting the nutrition value of traditional food versus fast/ultra-processed food.
- Supporting citizen volunteers to distribute surplus food from businesses to vulnerable communities.
- Progressing the trans-fat free @75 campaign.
- Training citizens in key nutrition messages to cascade across community settings.
- Involving the medical community in various campaigns to raise awareness of nutrition, food and health among citizens.
- Focusing on household food safety as well as business food safety and targeting small/ micro businesses.
- Establishing school nutrition action groups, involving parents, to support a transition to nutritionally diverse menus.





- Citizen engagement during food festivals and food safety/health guidance for festivals attracting millions of people.

According to the CEO, FSSAI, Shri Arun Singh, *“The EatSmart Cities Challenge will have a positive impact on the lives of urban population by motivating them to eat right. This Challenge will support a large-scale effort to transform our Country’s food ecosystem to one that is safer, healthier and climate friendly. The world is seeking inspiration and innovation from the 11 chosen cities which are the front-runners of this challenge. I appreciate efforts displayed by all the participating cities and hopeful that this will be a game changer in creating massive social and behavioural change towards right eating practices in the years to come.”*

In the scale up stage, cities will adopt an ag-

gressive approach through food systems approach in implementation of various Eat Right India programs at a larger scale. They will also work towards making their interventions sustainable and to scale it up across wider network. To support the cities, FSSAI along with Food Foundation, UK will organize a series of activities and deliberation sessions to provide technical assistance and showcase their efforts at international forums. This will be a 3 month incubator programme where the winning cities will learn and develop strategy and policies to refine their food vision and integrate them with the overall smart cities structure. Food Foundation will also work with the cities and help them prepare to showcase their efforts at various international forums including the Food Cities 2022.