

1. 3.7 % Food samples collected were unsafe, says FSSAI

Prelims Level: Constitutional Bodies, Regulatory Bodies.

Mains Level: GS-III Food Processing and related industries in India - Scope and Significance, Location, Upstream and Downstream Requirements, Supply Chain Management.

Why in News?

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on enforcement of norms has released a data has noted that 3.7% of the samples collected and analysed were found unsafe, 15.8% sub-standard and 9% samples had Labelling Defects.

About FSSAI:

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act).
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.
- The FSSAI comprises of a Chairperson and Twenty Two members out of which one – third are to be women. The Chairperson of FSSAI is appointed by the Central Government.

Functions of FSSAI:

- Framing of regulations to lay down the standards and guidelines of food safety.
- Granting FSSAI food safety license and certification for food businesses.
- Laying down procedure and guidelines for laboratories in food businesses.
- To provide suggestions to the government in framing the policies.
- To collect data regarding contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of rapid alert system.
- Creating an information network across the country about food safety.
- Promote general awareness about food safety and food standards.

Significance of the Report:

- Releasing the data for 2018-19 where 1, 06,459 samples were analysed, this was the first year the data had been compiled for unsafe, substandard and labelling defects separately.
- This would help authorities take precise corrective and preventive action.
- While there should be zero tolerance to unsafe food, sub-standard and labelling defects require greater efforts on capacity building of the businesses and standards as well as labelling requirements.

Key Findings of Report:

- There has been a 7% increase in the number of samples analysed during 2018-19 compared to 2017-18.
- Compared to the previous year, 25% more samples were found non-conforming. This shows that there has been better targeting of enforcement efforts by States/UTs.
- There has been a 36% increase in civil cases launched and a 67% increase in the number of cases where penalties were imposed.
- The amount of penalty — ₹32.58 crore— imposed has increased by 23% during 2018-19 compared to the previous year.
- There has been 86% increase in criminal cases launched. Since the conclusion of criminal cases takes time, 5,198 cases were concluded during 2017-18 that included a backlog of previous years.
- During the year there have been 701 convictions in criminal cases so far.

Best and Worst Performers:

- Ten States/UTs that have performed well include Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Chandigarh.
- Ten States that have performed poorly include Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Telangana, and Uttarakhand.
- Many of the poorly performing States have not been able to put in place full-time officers and do not have proper testing laboratories despite the food safety law coming into force over a decade ago.

