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FSSAI joins hands with industry to combat with food borne illness and spoilage by micro-organism

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Country’s food regulating authority, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), has blown a trumpet to eradicate food borne illness and spoilage by micro-organisms from the country. In its first action plan, FSSAI has decided to spread awareness among the people about these two issues. Food regulator will be conducting public lectures on the subject across the nation and these homilies will be delivered by well-known food microbiologist and co-founder of the largest online food microbiology database(ComBase) , Prof Mark Tamplin (University of Tasmania).

Last year, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India had signed an MOU with CHIFSS, a partnership initiative on food safety sciences between the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Hindustan Unilever (HUL) to promote science based food safety. Speaking at the first anniversary of the programme, Prof Tamplin said, “Predictive Models and Sensors in food supply chain to enhance food safety” highlighted the importance of understanding and characterizing the relationship between food and micro-organisms for building data on the prevalence and behavior of pathogens and spoilage organisms in foods. “This would not only help in predicting the shelf life of products, but also in developing safer food formulations”, he said.

Ashish Bahuguna, Chairperson, FSSAI, acknowledged CII and HUL for setting up this unique initiative for promoting science based food safety. Drawing a linkage between agriculture and safe food processing, Bahuguna highlighted the importance of understanding and learning the best international practices. Such knowledge building efforts would not only ensure safer food for domestic consumption, but will also boost exports. “Technical deliberations and scientific papers should be leveraged to a larger extent for understanding and resolving the issues on management of maximum chemical residue levels in agricultural products, being faced by food processing industry today”, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI said that public lectures such as these are aimed at driving and disseminating food safety on science based approaches among the general population, academicians and industry at large. The idea is to work towards improving food safety through facts & data based technical approaches, food safety plan guidance documents and on-line training programs. He congratulated CHIFSS for playing a key role in contributing to the development of sector specific FSMS Guidance Documents.

“These documents have been carefully utilized for developing training curriculum for Food Safety Training and Certification Program (FoSTaC) recently launched by FSSAI towards capacity building efforts. The vision is to have at least one trained Food Safety Supervisor in every food business operation,” Agarwal said.

Geetu Verma, Executive Director – Foods, HUL, in her opening remarks emphasized on the need for building food safety capability in India and reiterated HUL’s commitment to CHIFSS. “Food safety is a huge challenge in a country like India and thus government alone cannot be held responsible for it, all stakeholders should come together to address the issue”, added Verma.

The public lecture was attended by stakeholders including eminent scientists, government officials and professionals from academia and industry along with students from related fields. Subsequently, a panel discussion led by Dr. Nimish Shah, co-chair of scientific advisory committee, CHIFSS deliberated on the key microbiological safety challenges faced by consumers, and identified priority areas for capability and capacity building across the nation.

At the occasion, Bahuguna also released the Bakery Training module, as part of the training package for micro, small and medium food businessoperators. The training package is aimed at assisting FBOs in the bakery sector to develop and implement their food safety plan.

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