

Impact of Food Safety and Standards Act in COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: This paper presents an overview on the impact of food safety and standards act in COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Food business, Pandemic, Sop's.

1. Introduction

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (Act No. 34 of 2006) received the assent of the President of India on 23rd August 2006 and thereafter published in the Gazette of India (Extraordinary) Part I, Section 1 dated 24th August, 2006. Various provisions of the Act came with force on various dates through several notifications in this regard viz. notifications dated 15.10.2007, 28.05.2008, 18.11.2008, 09.03.2009, 31.07.2009, 29.07.2010 and 18.08.2010. Vide Cabinet Secretariat's notification under Govt. of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 dated 17.09.2007, the subject "Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006" was shifted to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare from the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare vide 'The Food Safety and Standards (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2007 dated 15th October, 2007 in Sub-Section(I), in clause (c) of Section 6 of The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 for the word 'Health', the words "Food Processing Industries" were substituted.

2. Directions for Food Businesses in Pandemic

To facilitate the continuity of food business operations during the prevailing COVID-19 outbreak, the Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has taken immediate steps to ensure uninterrupted food services/supply during the current scenario. FSSAI has reiterated and clarified that Import clearances of food items and testing services by FSSAI's notified laboratories (including both public and private laboratories) are Essential Services. Directions, with immediate effect have been issued to:

1. Allow FBOs, other than manufacturers, to temporarily operate their businesses on the basis of a valid receipt of FSSAI license/ registration application having 17-digit Application Reference Number (ARN) generated upon online application and fee payment on FoS CoS. This will enable quick expansion of logistic supply chains, warehouses, retail outlets, catering, food service establishments etc. wherever required. New businesses can start operating once they successfully

file a complete application on FOSCOS. This is an interim relief measure, the license/ registration will need to be secured before the expiry of the relaxation.

2. Manufacturers are allowed to increase/ enhance their capacity, on the basis of a valid receipt of FSSAI license/ registration application having 17- digit Application Reference Number (ARN) generated upon online application and fee payment on FoSCoS. This will enable immediate upscaling of production facilities without waiting for regulatory approvals.
3. No routine inspections are required to be done except in case of high risk food product viz. Milk and milk products, slaughter houses, meat and meat products etc. However, food safety authorities can conduct inspections in case of select cases on basis of risk profiling or in case of any food emergency/ incidents and complaints. Where feasible, inspections can be done by e-inspection.
4. The deadline for returns for 2020-21 has been extended till 30th, June 2021. All returns are required to be filed online on FOSCOS.
5. No penalty shall be payable for late filing of application for renewal of licenses.

3. Sop's to be Followed

A. According to ministry of health and family welfare

1) For restaurants

All Restaurants shall ensure the following arrangements

1. Takeaways to be encouraged, instead of Dine-In. Food delivery personnel should leave the packet at customer's door. DO NOT handover the food packet directly to the customer.
2. The staff for home deliveries shall be screened thermally by the restaurant authorities prior to allowing home deliveries.
3. Entrance to have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and thermal screening provisions.
4. Only asymptomatic staff and patrons shall be allowed.
5. All staff and patrons to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks. The face cover/masks has to be worn at all times inside the restaurant.

2) *For home*

1. Isolate vegetables for 4 hours and wash with hot water after taken from market
2. Use gloves at the time of taking food from market.
3. Discard carry bags
4. Maintain high standards hygiene at the time of preparing foods

3) *For hotels and other hospitality units*

All hotels and other hospitality units must take suitable measures to restrict any further transmission of COVID-19 while providing accommodation and other tourist services. The SOP aims to minimize all possible physical contacts between Staff and Guests and maintain social distancing and other preventive and safety measures against COVID-19.

1. Preferably separate entry and exits for guests, staff and goods/supplies shall be organized. Maintaining physical distancing of a minimum of 6 feet, when queuing up for entry and inside the hotel as far as feasible. Specific markings may be made with sufficient distance to manage the queue and ensure social distancing in the premises.
2. Number of people in the elevators shall be restricted, duly maintaining social distancing norms. Use of escalators with one person on alternate steps may be

encouraged.

3. Details of the guest (travel history, medical condition etc.) along with ID and self-declaration form must be provided by the guest at the reception.
4. Posters/standees/AV media on preventive measures about COVID-19 to be displayed prominently.
5. Hand sanitizers must be kept at the reception for guests to use. Guests to sanitize hands before and after filling relevant forms including A&D register.
6. Hotels must adopt contactless processes like QR code, online forms, digital payments like e-wallet etc. for both check-in and check-out.

4. Conclusion

In covid-19 pandemic, safety measures is very important. Read sop's of fssai and follow in life to break the chain of covid-19. Eat healthy and nutritious food for complete requirement of vitamins and iron in body. Improve metabolism with vitamins. Eat vitamin c rich foods for improve immunity and healthier skin. Eat calcium rich food for stronger bones.

References

- [1] <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2020.01854/full>