The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the country’s apex food regulator, will support two initiatives mooted by experts during the discussion at the Tasting India: Farm to Table Symposium, held in New Delhi recently. One is the dedication of a day to the global celebration of Indian cuisine and the other is the development of an Indian alternative to the Michelin Guide.

The former will be on the lines of Gout de France. On this day, Indian restaurants will serve a menu put together by an international committee comprising Indian chefs (working both in India and overseas) and Indian diplomatic missions. The latter will be on the lines of the Gault Millau in France, Osterie and Locande D’Italia in Italy and Zagat in the United States. This was stated by Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI.

Pushpesh Pant, culinary historian, chaired the concluding panel discussion at the symposium, where the Indian Food Manifesto, which is endorsed by FSSAI, was officially released. Agarwal made the announcement at the symposium in the presence of Madhur Jaffrey, global first lady of Indian cuisine, and highlighted that while the 10 points in the manifesto covered a number of concerns, they also represented the guiding principles for action programmes.

Further commenting on the initiatives during a press interaction, he said, “We believe this initiative will make the world not only get to sample the best of Indian cuisine, but also discover the vast variety of Indian agricultural produce and spices.”

Agarwal also described how the multi-city guide will be dovetailed with FSSAI’s proposed hygiene ratings for restaurants to enable both Indian consumers and international tourists make safe dining choices. “This would be run by an independent body of experts to insulate it against any undue influence,” he added.

The symposium opened with the launch of FSSAI’s initiative against hunger - Save Food, Share Food, Spread Joy: Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) – and linking it with getting street food vendors to join the national campaign by pledging to make fresh food donations.

The discussions at the event were led, among many others, by such personalities as Amitabh Kant, chief executive officer, NITI Aayog; Krishna Byre Gowda, agriculture minister, Karnataka; Satyajeet Rajan, director general, tourism, ministry of tourism; Kapil Chopra, president, Oberoi Group; Arjun
Sharma, chairman, Select Group; Suman Sahai, scientist, and Jang Bahadur Singh Sangha, Asia's single largest producer of potatoes.

In addition to this, FSSAI also announced the pre-event highlights of the National Street Food Festival, which is being organized in association with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). The three-day long festival will be held from 10am to 10pm at New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium between January 12 and 14, 2018.

The Authority had participated in last year’s National Street Food Festival organized by NASVI at the same venue between December 23 and 25. The festival stood out for the level of involvement of the street vending community from across the country, the compliance of the participants with safe hygiene practices, and the footfalls it drew over the three-day period. It has truly become a landmark in Delhi’s annual social calendar and raised the bar for street food vendors.

In view of its positive experience, and to institutionalize the festival, FSSAI has decided to support it this year. Agarwal said that the festival was an effort to sensitize vendors from across the country to safe food practices and to global hygiene and sanitation standards. The festival comprises components from various sectors. The themes include Organic Food Bazaar, Temple Foods of India, Festival Foods of India, Flavours of India and cultural and recreational activities. The festival will also be marked by the presence of street food legends of the country.