FSSAI turns aggregator to eradicate hunger

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*Indian Food Recovery Alliance will serve as a platform for NGOs engaged in collecting leftover food to meet volunteers, donors*

They say charity begins at home. This festive season, the food safety regulator is trying to emulate the adage. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has now become a portal to facilitate recovery and distribution of leftover food in the country. The FSSAI has done this by becoming an aggregator where non-governmental organisations (NGO) already working to feed the needy by collecting leftover food can meet volunteers and donors on one platform — the Indian Food Recovery Alliance (Ifra).

Data suggests that 40 per cent of the food produced is wasted. The Ifra portal may become a game changer in ensuring nutrition for all by not letting food go waste.

"Just as the world’s largest cab hailing service does not own cars itself, the FSSAI doesn’t participate in any of the activities," Chief Executive Officer Pawan Agarwal says. "We only put volunteers and donors working for the cause in touch with NGOs they could partner with." These NGOs are trying to raise funds from various sources, which will support the cause.

One of the partners to have come on board is the Tata Trusts; it is willing to provide logistic support as well as vessels to collect food and feed the needy, says Agarwal. Some of the agencies already involved with the FSSAI collect food from weddings, restaurants and companies to provide food to the hungry. Others such as No Food Waste also conduct awareness to ensure food isn’t wasted.

The website has gone live for trial purposes. The FSSAI plans to formally launch it after three months. There are already eight active members. One can also become a beneficiary by registering on the web portal. Beneficiaries are essentially ambassadors of localities, who can procure food from food recovery organisations and distribute it in their localities.

Data aggregated by the FSSAI from these agencies show that 15 million people have been fed 4,997 tonnes of food from the quantity collected. One of the