FSSAI training programme on GFLP for state food lab officials underway

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The five-day training programme on good food laboratory practices (GFLP) for food safety laboratory officials, organised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), is underway at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry’s (FICCI) Research and Analysis Centre in New Delhi.

The country’s apex food regulator, in its order, stated that officials from all the state- and FSSAI-notified laboratories are required to attend the programme, in which such subjects as the role of food testing laboratories in ensuring food safety in India, sampling and handling, testing of quality and safety parameters in food samples as per FSSAI, design, accommodation and environment in a food testing lab, challenges in food microbiology testing, laboratory safety and waste disposal and demonstration of multi-class, multi-residue analysis in antibiotic residues, pesticide residues, heavy metals and alfatoxins and microbiological analysis will be deliberated upon.

Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs, opined that this was a much-needed effort on the part of the apex food regulator to impart lab training to the technicians working in state food labs.

He said, “As labs, we all think we have the best safety practices, standard procedures and protocols in place. However, we need a unified standard that is synonymous with safety standards set as per the Indian guidelines.”

“The five-day training programme on good food laboratory practices (GFLP) is extremely beneficial for food personnel and technical people working in food
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testing laboratories,” Bhadri said.

He added, “Simple, but much-needed aspects of any food testing lab, like sample handling, the importance of a food testing lab to the food industry, challenges, infrastructure, safety elements, and most importantly, training on various important analytical tests, will comprise the essence of the training programme.”

“All in all, the programme will be extremely helpful in educating testing staff, who, in turn, will accelerate safety while conducting food testing in India’s FSSAI-notified food testing laboratories. The FSSAI notification in itself is a standard that signifies that the reports generated are authentic. Hence, this will help us move one step closer to achieving complete food safety,” he added.

This is particularly important in the light of lack of training of lab technicians when it comes to handling food.

Bhadri stated that the lab technicians were efficient, but not up to the mark. “There are several factors that can be looked upon. Firstly, the students that enter the testing field are not effectively trained. They have an excellent theoretical knowledge base, but they are found wanting when it comes to standard testing protocols.”

“The staff hired should also have a background of the testing field. If not, they should be effectively trained before they conduct tests, prepare solutions or interact with the media. Here is where this training will be effective. Five days of 360-degree training will help them with better handling, preparation and working, and the difference will definitely be seen after the training concludes,” he added.

Bhadri stated, “Such programmes should be conducted more than once a year. This will ensure that all the FSSAI-notified labs are working in the same direction and the people entitled with a task as important as the testing of the food products for better quality and safety are well trained and aware technically. This will, without any doubt, strengthen the food testing system, eventually aiding in the elevation of the Indian food industry in the Indian and international markets.”