India has launched the Indian Food Laboratory Network (InFoLNet) and Food Safety on Wheels, strengthened state food testing laboratories, compiled a toolkit for rapid testing of common adulterants and decided to conduct the examination for junior analysts.

Testing of food gives confidence to consumers that food is safe for consumption. It is an integral part of the food safety ecosystem.

The number and spread of food testing labs in the country is currently inadequate. To strengthen the food testing infrastructure, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is encouraging both public and private investment in food testing infrastructure.

With the support of the Central government, the country’s apex food regulator has taken up strengthening of State food labs, provision of mobile food labs and related initiatives.
On the eve of completion of the eleventh year of the umbrella Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, FSSAI has launched five key initiatives to give a big push to food testing system in the country.

**Launch of Indian Food Laboratory Network (InFoLNet)**

A digital solution to connect all food labs in the country to a centralised lab management system (LMS).

This system would provide an end-to-end solution, where samples collected by the field units would be coded and tested in FSSAI-notified labs and the results would be available in a central database.

This data would be available for enforcement and food import controls in a seamless manner.

InFoLNet would become a focal point for risk analysis, standards improvement, training and capacity-building and better surveillance.

**Food Safety on Wheels**

Mobile units, called Food Safety on Wheels, are multi-purpose vehicles for food testing, public education and awareness and for conducting awareness programmes.

Mobile units have fully-functional laboratories equipped with basic infrastructure for quick qualitative testing for detection of common adulterants in various food commodities.

These mobile units would spread awareness around food safety and hygiene and be useful for conducting training and certification programs for food businesses.
In addition, these mobile units would help the functionaries in the states to enhance their outreach and conduct surveillance activities even in far-flung areas. Sixty-two such units are planned, at least one for each state or Union Territory (UT) and more in respect of bigger states. Nine mobile units have recently been flagged off. This covers the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

**Strengthening of state food testing labs**

FSSAI is also strengthening 45 state food labs by providing state-of-art high end food testing equipment including microbiology labs. This initiative has been rolled out today with exchange of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with eight states/UTs.

**Toolkit for rapid testing of common adulterants**

A compilation of simple test methods for detecting common adulterants at home such as extraneous matters deliberately added with food has been put together. Detecting Adulterants with Rapid Testing (DART) offers a self-enforcement tool and a ready guide to the citizens to combat adulteration at home.

**Junior analyst examination**

In order to address the issue of acute shortage of food analysts in the country, FSSAI has decided to hold the junior analysts’ examination along with food analysts’ examination in late September or early October this year.
This will help to attract young talent for food analysis in the country, and, over time, build a large pool of such analysts both for the food industry and the regulatory system.

Ashish Bahuguna, chairperson, FSSAI said, “This holistic effort towards using digital solutions, strengthening food safety infrastructure, enhancing capabilities and creating a large pool of trained specialists would go a long way in ensuring that the food safety and hygiene ecosystem becomes more robust.”