Food safety regulator to ensure clean street-food hubs

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To ensure street food available in India is safe and hygienic has been on top of FSSAI’s agenda. (HT File Photo)

India’s top food regulator could soon certify popular street-food places, assuring quality for those in love with street food but wary of hygiene. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is in the process of designating popular street food localities across the country as ‘clean street food hubs’, if they fulfil certain food safety and hygiene criteria.
“Street food is popular among people and there already are streets and cluster of shops in different states that are known for their street food. What we are planning is to ensure that the food served at these places is safe and hygienic,” said Pawan Agarwal, CEO- FSSAI. The food regulator currently is in the process of formulating guidelines for certification.

“The parameters that we are considering include best practices for garbage disposal, maintaining personal hygiene, demarcating cooking and non-cooking area, working street lights, pest control and overall cleanliness among other things,” he said. Once the guidelines are formed, the food regulator will write to states to get local authorities involved in the project.

“Many of the parameters go beyond FSSAI mandate so we will have to rope in various departments locally to see to it that this project is implemented successfully.” Eating unhygienic food, especially street food, can lead to serious health conditions. “Eating contaminated food or water can lead to diarrhoea, typhoid fever, viral hepatitis or even cholera. We frequently get patients who get sick after eating street food or taking contaminated water,” says Dr MP Sharma, chairman, gastroenterology, Rockland Hospital.

To ensure street food available in India is safe and hygienic has been on top of FSSAI’s agenda. It started project clean street food earlier this year that involves training and capacity building of the street food vendors and ensures proper regulatory oversight over them under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. Close to 20,000 street food vendors have been trained in best hygiene practices in the national Capital already, and the training will be extended to other states in coming months.