Our Bureau, New Delhi

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has tied up with Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) for training its lab personnel on high-end testing of mycotoxins, pesticide residues and veterinary drug residues in Singapore and at the University of Maryland in the United States.

FSSAI, in collaboration with GFSP, has already organised the first round training programme for ten trainers on pesticide residues and mycotoxins in Singapore in December last year. These trainers would now act as master trainers and conduct training of the food testing personnel in the country.

The reproduction of the Training of Trainers programme is proposed at the National Institute of Plant Health Management (NIPHM) in Hyderabad; the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore; the Central Food Laboratory (CFL), Kolkata and a private lab in Nashik.

GFSP has agreed to provide training similar to the one given in Singapore to the apex regulator’s master trainers on veterinary drug residues proposed to be held in University of Maryland.

It will also provide technical assistance to FSSAI for making a detailed assessment of training needs of food safety personnel in the country, providing international consultancy and establishing international advisory mechanisms for benchmarking and harmonising food safety practices to the best in the world.
GFSP is a unique public-private initiative of the World Bank dedicated to improving the food safety in middle-income and developing countries. It brings together producers, industries, governments, regulatory bodies, international organisations and civil society to drive a globally-coordinated and locally-driven food safety approach. It combines food safety training and technical support so that developing countries can improve their food safety systems and benefit from better compliance of food safety standards.

A meeting of the members of the governing council (GC) of GFSP, represented by the World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Food Industry Asia (FIA), USAID and Waters Corporations, was held in New Delhi recently.

On the sidelines of this meeting, the GC members of GFSP had a meeting with FSSAI and other stakeholders of food safety in India.

From India, apart from senior FSSAI officials, industry majors, including chief executive officers of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), Nestle, Tata Sons and Patanjali, representatives of consumer organisations, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the scientific community from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) also participated.

Nathan Belete, chairperson, GFSP Governing Council, appreciated the manner in which the stakeholders in India were taking forward the agenda of food safety, which is globally unique, and public-private partnerships were the key to addressing these issues.

Ashish Bahuguna, chairperson, FSSAI, stated, “India’s food authority is relatively new, and there is immense opportunity for India to learn from the global best practices.”
Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, outlined the initiatives and steps taken by the apex regulator in addressing the issues of food safety and hygiene in a very comprehensive and structured manner.

He expressed hope that the collaboration with GFSP, which has began with activity around training in food safety, would expand in the coming years. India is committed to ensure food safety for all across the world.

In addition to GFSP, FSSAI has international partnerships for cooperation in the areas of food safety with various other countries, including Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)/joint statements signed with food safety authorities in Germany, France, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

FSSAI is also working closely with food safety authorities in other countries, including the United States, Canada and Singapore for the global benchmarking of the food safety regulatory system in India.