FSSAI to create laboratory network to test food

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The country’s top food regulator is in the process of establishing a high-tech laboratory network that will be referred to in case of conflicting results during primary testing of food samples.

The results from the designated labs could act as evidence for punitive action in case the sample fails quality testing.
The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has identified about 15 laboratories across India that will be upgraded with state-of-the-art infrastructure to conduct advanced testing.

“We are aiming to use these labs to resolve whatever dispute or confusion arises out of conflicting test results from different laboratories,” said Pawan Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI.

“After primary testing at local labs, the sample is sent to an appellate authority in case of any confusion. These high-tech labs will have the authority to certify and their word will be final,” he added. The lab network will be created in a phased manner and is expected to take about a year to complete. The food regulator is also upgrading the existing government laboratories to bring uniformity in the quality of testing procedures.

“We are also creating four new labs in Ghaziabad, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai where samples will be tested using modern methods. There will be dedicated sections for testing of dairy, poultry, vegetables and other items,” said Agarwal. India has more than 250 food-testing laboratories, of which about 150 are run by either the state or central governments. A budget of ₹480 crore has been allocated for the creation and overall upgradation of food testing labs. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India recently criticised the FSSAI for the state of government-run testing labs.