Governance among 15 areas identified by FSSAI to transform food sector

New Delhi: Governance and administration (with a focus on internal capacity building), food standards (with a focus on identifying gaps in local as well as international practices) and the Food Safety and Knowledge Assimilation Network (FSKAN) are among the 15 areas the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has identified in a bid to transform the country’s food industry.

The other areas are registration, licensing and compliance, institutional capacity for food safety in states, food imports, food testing, safe food practices, food safety training, social and behavioural change, consumer connect, promoting a healthy diet, preventing food wastage and managing food loss, promoting hygienic street food and local food culture, technological intervention and global outreach.

The country’s apex food regulator has done so to give its food safety ecosystem a fillip. In the last fiscal year, the expenditure on internal capacity building was a meagre Rs 19 crore. But this fiscal, it has gone up four times to Rs 76 crore. Work on the FSKAN has commenced with the objective of exchanging scientific knowhow and funding research.

“This was not only to strengthen such efforts as safe and nutritious food for all, but also will lead the way ahead. These key areas to will act as enablers for the convergence of ideas between the consumers and the food business operators (FBOs). Moreover, the aim is to make FBOs self-complaint and harmonise the standards for the food industry,” the regulator stated.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, said, “We work with multiple stakeholders simultaneously, and therefore, we will be able to keep the focus on the objectives by publishing these key interest areas. This would also be a guiding principle for the stakeholders that these are areas they have to work. So we have identified 15 key areas where we have to work in a significant manner and move ahead.”
“The FSSAI logo has begun to inspire trust in consumers, and now the main challenge for the regulator is to reinforce this trust and support it with a robust back-end system and processes,” he added.

“The key elements of such a system would be unambiguous food safety standards based on a methodological risk assessment, good manufacturing practices and good retail practices, reliable food testing facilities, risk-based enforcement and self-compliance, regular surveys into the assessment of a food safety ecosystem, and finally, consumer feedback,” Agarwal said.