Creating ecosystem for safe food items rests with citizens, food businesses, regulator, says FSSAI chief

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MANGALURU: Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said that creating an ecosystem for safe foods rests on three pillars viz., responsible citizen, food businesses and the regulator.

Addressing an ASSOCHAM summit in New Delhi, he said, "We have to go a long way in basically figuring out, educating our consumers and citizens as to what food is safe and how to have it, these are issues we are working on with lot of stakeholders to create demand for safe food."

He explained that the idea of the food regulator is to curb the tendency of consuming undesirable food items, enable the industry to produce safe and wholesome food which is also expected of them and finally constant improvement in food standards.

"While our effort has been to provide a light-touch regulation in the food sector, we have worked relentlessly over the past three years to provide standards that are globally benchmarked and I am happy to share with you that most of food standards have either been released or are in final stages of being released," said Agarwal.

Talking about the compliance of food standards, he said, "Ensuring compliance of these standards is an extremely weak area, we are aware of the problems in this space and particularly because though FSSAI Act expected uniform application of food law across the country, this is really not happening."

He further said that going ahead FSSAI would focus on compliance of Food Safety Laws in letter and spirit.
"The expectation from food businesses is also that engagement with government and regulator is not only confined to pain points that food businesses have but engagement is more of a 360-degree approach where-in you work with the government and regulator to ensure that together we create a more robust and safe ecosystem for food sector in our country," added the FSSAI chief.