

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.191
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18TH MARCH, 2025

TESTING FOR TOXIC ELEMENTS IN PDS FOOD GRAINS

191 SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

Will the Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government would conduct regular testing of PDS food grains for toxic elements like Selenium, Arsenic and other heavy metals;
- (b) whether there is any plan to establish food safety labs in every district to monitor the nutritional quality of ration supplies;
- (c) the awareness programs launched to educate people about food related health risks and their preventive measures; and
- (d) whether there is any plan to review and revise procurement policies to ensure food safety?

A N S W E R
MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND
MINISTRY OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

(a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE STARRED QUESTION NO. 191 FOR ANSWER ON 18.03.2025 IN THE RAJYA SABHA.

(a): The foodgrain meant for central pool are procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) as part of Centralized Procurement and State Agencies through Decentralized Procurement strictly as per the uniform specification formulated by the Department of Food and Public Distribution. During storage, the foodgrains are tested periodically for pesticides residue, mycotoxins, Deoxynivalenol (DON) and uric acid etc as per Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) standards. FSSAI has specified Maximum levels for various heavy metals including Lead, Cadmium etc in cereal grains under FSS regulation (Contaminants, toxins and residue) regulation 2011. As Selenium content is intrinsically linked to soil and agro-climatic conditions and has a narrow range between its essential and toxic levels, globally the regulations focus on upper dietary limits (ULs) rather than fixed maximum limits; accordingly, in India the ICMR has specified Recommended Intake and Tolerable Upper Intake Levels for selenium in daily diet from all food sources. The foodgrains meet the quality parameters as prescribed by FSSAI for foodgrains issued under Public Distribution (PDS) and other welfare schemes (OWS).

(b): As of now, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has a robust network of 243 notified primary food testing laboratories, 22 referral laboratories and 285 mobile food testing laboratories. This extensive infrastructure caters to the national need for food safety testing. Given the existing capacity, there are no plans to establish food safety labs in every district at present..

(c): The FSSAI has launched following programme to educate people about food related health risks and their preventive measures:

- 'Eat Right India' movement has been started as a collective effort of all stakeholders, led by FSSAI, to transform the food ecosystem of the country with a tagline 'Sahi Bhojan Behtar Jeevan' (right food, better life).
- 'Aaj se Thoda Kam' campaign encourages consumers to gradually reduce their intake of fat, salt, and sugar through dietary modifications.

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- A dedicated playlist “How to check for adulteration” containing 75 short videos for checking adulteration available on FSSAI's You Tube channel.
- Social media campaigns like - “No To Adulteration”, "Har Label Kuch Kehta Hai" (Every Label Speaks) etc. to promote food safety consciousness and healthy eating habits across India across platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Public App, and YouTube.
- A series of short videos related to Food Safety and Hygiene in English, Hindi, and 12 regional languages, accompanied by flyers, banners, and audio clips. These resources, available on the Eat Right India website, provide useful guidance.

(d): The procured foodgrains, which meet the quality standards of FSSAI for foodgrains are only issued under PDS and other welfare schemes (OWS).
