



World Food Safety Day

For Prelims: [World Food Safety Day \(WFSD\)](#), [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#), [International Year of Millets](#), [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), [Adulteration of food products](#).

For Mains: Major Challenges Related to Food Safety in India, [State Food Safety Index](#)

Why in News?

The [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) organised a session on June 7th, 2023, to celebrate [World Food Safety Day](#).

- The **5th State Food Safety Index (SFSI)** was also unveiled at the event.

What is World Food Safety Day?

- **World Food Safety Day** is a global campaign that aims to draw attention and inspire action to help **prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks**.
 - It is celebrated on 7 June every year since 2019, following a resolution by the **United Nations General Assembly**.
- The campaign is led by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#), in collaboration with Member States and other relevant organisations.
- **Theme for 2023: Food standards save lives.**

What is State Food Safety Index?

- **About:** FSSAI has developed the [State Food Safety Index \(first launched in 2018-19\)](#) to **measure the performance of states on various parameters of Food Safety**.
- **Parameters:** This index is based on performance of State/ UT on five significant parameters, namely, **Human Resources and Institutional Data, Compliance, Food Testing - Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training & Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment**.
 - The Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model that provides an objective framework for evaluating food safety across all States/UTs.
- **Recognition of Top Performers:** Kerala secured the top rank among larger states, followed by Punjab and Tamil Nadu.
 - **Goa** emerged as the leader among smaller states, with **Manipur and Sikkim following suit**.
 - **Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, and Chandigarh** secured the top three ranks among union territories.

What are the Other Major Highlights of the Event?

- **Eat Right Challenge for Districts - Phase II:** Winners of the **Eat Right Challenge** for Districts were honoured for their outstanding efforts in improving the food environment and raising awareness about food safety.
 - Remarkable achievements were observed in districts from **Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra.**

Note: FSSAI has initiated the **Eat Right India movement**. The movement is based on three key themes:

- if it's not safe, it's not food' (safe food),
- food should not only serve the palate but is also meant for body and mind (healthy diets)
- food has to be good both for people and the planet' (sustainable diets).
- The **Eat Right Challenge** is envisioned as a competition among districts and cities to recognize their efforts in adopting and scaling up various initiatives under Eat Right India.

- **Eat Right Millets Melas:** To commemorate India's 75th Independence anniversary and the [International Year of Millets](#), the FSSAI envisioned organising Eat Right Millets Melas nationwide.
 - These **melas showcase the diversity of cuisines and millet recipes in the country.**
- **Training Food Business Operators:** FSSAI aims to train **25 lakh food business operators** in the next three years to ensure food quality standards are met across the country.
- **Food Streets: Establishment of 100 Food Streets** across the country that meet quality benchmarks for food safety, hygiene, and nutrition, was announced as the part of the event.
- **Rapid Food Testing Kit (RAFT) Portal:** The **RAFT portal** was unveiled as part of FSSAI's digitization efforts.
 - The portal streamlines the **operations of the RAFT Scheme**, ensuring transparency and accountability.
 - **Rapid Analytical Food Testing (RAFT) Kit/Equipment/Method facilitates spot field testing by Food Safety Officers (FSOs)** or Mobile Testing Labs or to improve speed and reduce testing costs in food laboratories.
- **Manuals for Enhanced Food Safety Practices:** The Union Health Minister released three manuals aimed at enhancing food safety practices nationwide.
 - Manuals include the analysis methods for [Fish & Fish Products](#), [Cereal and Cereal Products \(2nd edition\)](#), and [Beverages: Tea, Coffee & Chicory.](#)

Why is Food Safety Important?

- Food safety is a shared **responsibility between governments, producers and consumers.**
- According to **WHO**, an **estimated 600 million people - almost 1 in 10 people in the world -** fall ill after eating contaminated food and 420 000 die every year.
 - **Children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the foodborne disease burden**, with 1,25,000 deaths every year.
 - Foodborne diseases can also have long-term consequences, such as **malnutrition, stunting, cancer and chronic diseases.**
- Food safety is also essential for achieving several of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), such as ending hunger, improving health, reducing poverty and protecting the environment.

What are the Major Challenges Related to Food Safety in India?

- **Lack of Infrastructure and Resources:** Insufficient infrastructure and resources pose significant challenges in ensuring food safety across the country.
 - **Limited laboratory facilities and testing capabilities** result in inadequate monitoring and detection of contaminants. Inadequate storage and transportation facilities can lead to improper handling of food, increasing the risk of contamination.
- **Contamination and Adulteration:**
 - Contamination of food with **pathogens, chemicals, and toxins** remains a major concern

in India. [Adulteration of food products with substandard ingredients](#) or harmful substances is prevalent, compromising food safety and public health.

- **Unregulated use of pesticides and chemical additives** in agriculture and food production contribute to the contamination of food.
- **Poor Hygiene and Sanitation Practices:**
 - Lack of proper handwashing, sanitation facilities, and clean water sources in food handling and processing establishments increase the **risk of microbial contamination**.
 - Unhygienic conditions in food markets, street food vendors, and restaurants contribute to the spread of foodborne illnesses.
- **Weak Regulatory Framework and Enforcement:** Inconsistencies in standards and regulations across different states and regions create challenges in maintaining uniform food safety practices.
 - **Limited resources and manpower for inspection** and enforcement result in inadequate monitoring and control of food safety standards.
- **Rapid Urbanization and Changing Food Habits:** Rapid [urbanisation](#) and changing food habits present challenges in ensuring food safety.
 - Increased demand for **processed and ready-to-eat foods**, as well as street foods, requires robust monitoring and regulation to address safety concerns.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Food Testing Laboratories:** There is a need to Establish well-equipped and accredited **food testing laboratories across the country**, especially in rural areas.
 - These labs should be capable of conducting rapid and accurate tests for various contaminants, including pesticides, heavy metals, and pathogens, ensuring timely identification of unsafe food.
- **Empowering Local Communities:** There is a need to encourage community participation and awareness by organising workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions on food safety.
 - There is also a need to **empower local communities to take ownership of food safety issues and implement solutions at the grassroots level**.
- **Ensuring Transparency in Food Stock Holdings:** Using IT to improve communication channels with farmers can help them to get a better deal for their produce while **improving storage houses with the latest technology is equally important to deal with natural disasters and hoarding**.
 - Further, **foodgrain banks can be deployed at block/village level, from which people may get subsidised food grains against food coupons (that can be provided to Aadhar linked beneficiaries)**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q.1 In the context of India's preparation for Climate-Smart Agriculture, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. The 'Climate-Smart Village' approach in India is a part of a project led by the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), an international research programme.
2. The project of CCAFS is carried out under Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) headquartered in France.
3. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India is one of the CGIAR's research centres.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Q.2 With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

[Source: PIB](#)

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