

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1105  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**CORONA VIRUS IN IMPORTED FOOD**

**1105. SHRI BIDYUT BARAN MAHATO:  
SHRI SANJAY SADASHIVRAO MANDLIK:  
SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA:  
SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:**

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has constituted a committee of experts to examine the possibilities of the presence of Corona virus in imported food items from the novel corona virus affected countries and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has taken samples from each imported food consignment for testing in its laboratories;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the findings of the committee thereon;
- (d) whether the Committee has issued any advisory regarding consumption of foods as a precautionary measure from novel corona virus and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the other steps taken/being taken by the FSSAI in view of the novel corona virus?

**ANSWER  
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND  
FAMILY WELFARE  
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)**

(a) to (d): Consequent upon outbreak of novel corona virus in China and other countries and concerns raised regarding safety of food items imported from these countries, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had constituted a Committee of Experts to examine the possibility of presence of corona virus in food imported from these countries and address the concerns in this regard.

The Committee, in its Report, opined that as of now, there is no conclusive evidence for food borne transmission of Corona virus and concluded that food imported into India from Corona virus affected countries is safe for human consumption. The Committee agreed with the advisories of global organisations like World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) etc. that the predominant routes of transmission of Corona virus appear to be human to human.

In the light of findings of the Expert Committee, a press release was issued by FSSAI on 05.03.2020 to address the concerns of consumers and general public in this regard. Commissioners of Food Safety of all States /UTs were also advised vide letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 to take appropriate steps to disseminate correct information to consumers and general public to counter any false propaganda.

During the lockdown period, import clearance of food items and food testing laboratories (National Food labs at NCR and Kolkata and FSSAI accredited private labs) were classified as essential services and regular import clearance procedure was followed.

(e): To guide the public and Food Business Operators (FBOs) about safe food practices and facilitate the FBOs to ensure that the food supply chain is not affected, a number of other steps have been taken by FSSAI:

- A detailed Guidance Note 'Food Hygiene and Safety Guidelines for Food Businesses during Corona virus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic' has been released
- An e-handbook on "Eat Right during COVID-19" for citizens highlighting safe food practices to be followed and tips on health and nutrition has been released.
- FSSAI is using its social media extensively to disseminate information amid COVID-19 including public awareness material on eating right during COVID.
- FSSAI has collaborated with MyGov platform to disseminate key messages in the form of small videos of 30/40 seconds with endorsement from various experts in the field of food safety and nutrition including doctors, nutritionists, dieticians, chefs as well as Sports personnel. Similar collaboration is also being carried out with UNICEF India.
- FSSAI has created a COVID 19 specific page on their website that incorporates various communication collaterals, guidance notes and press releases along with important notifications, directions and orders released during this period. It is available at [www.fssai.gov.in](http://www.fssai.gov.in).
- To avoid delay in issuance of license where licensing authority decided to conduct inspection prior to issue of license, licensing authorities were asked to conduct it by way of e-inspection. This has been extended upto 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020.
- FBOs, other than manufacturers, were allowed to temporarily operate their businesses on the basis of application for license/registration submitted online. This facility has been extended upto 31<sup>st</sup>December, 2020
- FBOs, whose FSSAI license/registration expired w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2019 have been given grace period and allowed to continue their food businesses with their existing license/registration number without any late fee.
- FSSAI also initiated through its flagship Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) program, an online training module for food handlers on the essentials of food safety and hygiene practices during COVID 19 through its empanelled partners.
- The Food Authority interacted with top leaders of the food industry on 12th May, 2020 with the aim to ensure uninterrupted food supply while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 for workers, customers and players in the food supply chain. The discussions helped address most of the concerns and challenges voiced by the food industry.