

Press Release

India Celebrates 60 Years of Codex: Safeguarding Consumer Health and Fair Food Trade

*"Collaboration and ongoing participation in Codex activities are essential to ensure food safety remains at the forefront"- **Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Chairperson, FSSAI***

New Delhi, October 27, 2023: The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an international organisation set jointly by FAO and WHO in the year 1963 to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the National Codex Contact Point for India.

This year Codex marks its 60th anniversary and to commemorate this milestone, a collection of international food standards to ensure safety and quality in the food trade, FSSAI in association with FICCI organised a seminar on 'India Celebrates 60 Year of Codex on 27th October 2023 in Delhi.

The event witnessed the presence of some of the eminent names which included Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Chairperson, FSSAI; Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao, CEO, FSSAI and Shri Raj Rajasekar, Vice Chairperson, CAC. During the opening remarks, these esteemed individuals emphasized Codex's pivotal role in fortifying food safety policies on a global scale, fostering trade through the harmonization of international food standards.

Addressing the participants, **Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, MoHFW and Chairperson, FSSAI**, congratulated Codex for its exemplary contributions in last six decades and stressed upon the need for a science-based framework and that active participation from developing nations cannot be overlooked. He urged for a science-based framework and active involvement from developing nations. He stressed the necessity of adapting to new challenges and technologies, asserting, "Collaboration and ongoing participation in Codex activities are essential to ensure food safety remains at the forefront." Sh. Pant assured that the Indian government is "fully cognisant of the need to bring food regulations in line with modern times", and a new Food Safety Bill (amendment to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006) is almost ready. He added, "Efforts are underway to table it in the upcoming Parliament session."

In a keynote address during the inaugural session, **Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao, CEO, FSSAI**, addressed the pressing issues surrounding changing food habits and the emerging challenges associated with cutting-edge food innovations. He underscored the importance of establishing real standards and ensuring the delivery of safe food to the public, stating that it is "imperative for the scientific community." He further emphasised the importance of CAC in assuring the same.

In alignment with the commitment to global food safety, **Shri. Raj Rajasekar, Vice Chairperson of the CAC**, highlighted the remarkable expansion of Codex, from its origins as a small group of developed countries to a

robust organization with 188 member countries and one-member organization. He emphasized that food safety is integrated into every organization and government, emphasizing its paramount significance.

Sh. Rajasekar also commended FSSAI's democratic process in shaping food safety norms and the pivotal role of multi-stakeholder participation, including industry and civil society, in crafting food safety regulations. He also addressed emerging concerns such as the entry of microplastics into the human bloodstream, citing a study from the Netherlands. He concluded by emphasizing the urgency of innovating alternative technologies for food packaging.

The inaugural session paved the way for two illuminating panel discussions on the future of Codex and the imperative to enhance capacity for greater Codex participation in the coming decade. India's burgeoning engagement in Codex activities was recognized, with notable achievements such as hosting the Codex committee on spices and culinary herbs, co-hosting various sessions on food hygiene and contaminants, and chairing and co-chairing working groups within the Codex system.
