GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 883
ANSWERED ON 06TH FEBRUARY, 2026

FOOD TESTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND QUALITY STANDARDS

883. SHRI BHABANESWAR KALITA:

Will the Minister of ***FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES*** be pleased to state:

(a) the manner in which new scheme for NABL-accredited Food Testing Labs is helping abridging quality gaps by expanding lab networks and ensuring fast, accurate testing for domestic use and exports;
(b) the quantum of reduction in export rejections seen after strengthening modern testing facilities and mandating NABL-accredited labs for processed foods;
(c) whether the funding for upgrading university and R&D food testing labs is effectively supporting advanced testing methods for emerging contaminants and allergens; and
(d) the manner in which NIFTEM Kundli and Thanjavur are contributing to standardized industry practices and food safety training as centres of excellence?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES
(SHRI RAVNEET SINGH)

(a): Food Safety & Quality Assurance Infrastructure (FSQAI) is a component scheme under PMKSY aimed at strengthening and expanding the network of NABL-accredited food testing laboratories by providing financial assistance for setting up food testing labs. The scheme will play a critical role in closing quality and compliance gaps across the food testing ecosystem by significantly expanding laboratory network and improving access to reliable analytical services to the industries. The scheme supports to create infrastructure, reducing testing turnaround time, and geographical reach. This will enable food businesses, exporters, and enforcement agencies to access standardized, internationally (as per ISO:17025) accredited testing services closer to exporters and production hubs, resulting in faster certification, improved regulatory compliance, and strengthened confidence in Indian food products for both domestic consumption and international trade.

Key benefits of NABL accreditation for Food Testing Labs ensures international acceptance of food testing results from NABL-accredited laboratories under the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) and International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation Mutual Recognition Arrangement (ILAC MRA) economies. It Builds confidence in the technical competence and reliability of test results through compliance with ISO/IEC 17025:2017. Also reduces duplication of testing and technical barriers to trade, supporting exports. It Supports regulators by providing credible and globally accepted test data for food safety decisions. This will save time and cost for industry through faster approvals and reduced retesting. It will Strengthen market access for domestically produced and exported food products.

(b): The strengthening of modern testing facilities and the mandatory use of NABL-accredited laboratories for processed food testing for exports have resulted in significant improvements in export compliance. Several exporting sectors, including fruits, vegetables, spices, marine products, and processed foods, have reported a noticeable reduction in rejections at importing country borders due to improved conformity with residue limits, contaminant specifications, and microbiological standards. Enhanced testing infrastructure and validated methods have improved pre-export screening, thereby minimizing non-compliance risks and supporting smoother market access for Indian food products in global markets.

(c): The funding support provided for upgrading university laboratory (like NIFTEM-Kundli) and R&D food testing laboratories has been effectively utilized to introduce advanced analytical capabilities. These upgrades have enabled laboratories to expand their testing scope for emerging contaminants, pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, food allergens, mycotoxins, heavy metals, and novel food ingredients**,** in line with evolving regulatory requirements and international standards.

(d): NIFTEM Kundli and Thanjavur act as Centres of Excellence by integrating advanced research, industry-aligned education, incubation, and technology transfer, promoting standardized practices through specialized training in GMP, HACCP, packaging, sensory science, and food safety for entrepreneurs, FPOs, SHGs, and industry staff. The institutes provide advanced training programs, skill development initiatives, industry-oriented certification courses, and hands-on laboratory equipment exposure in alignment with food safety management systems, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance (as per FSSAI, APEDA). They also support harmonization of testing practices (like NIFTEM-K is helping to FSSAI for Fortified foods), dissemination of best practices, and technology transfer to MSMEs and start-ups. Through their research, training, and outreach activities, NIFTEMs are significantly contributing to building a robust, science-driven, and globally competitive food safety ecosystem in India. NIFTEM-T houses the Centre of Excellence in Non-Thermal Processing (CENTP), unique in Asia, focusing on pulsed electric fields, high-pressure, UV, etc., to improve food safety, nutrition, and shelf life. NIFTEMs have NABL-accredited food quality testing lab, notified by FSSAI as a Referral Food Laboratory, providing crucial testing and evaluation for product quality and consumer acceptance ensuring high standards. They bridge academia and industry by developing indigenous technology, offering short-term courses, and fostering innovation for global competitiveness and food security.

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