

# Awareness amongst Street Vendors about Hygiene and Sanitation Regulations of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

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## Abstract

*Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has consolidated various acts and is solely authorized to regulate food safety standards in India. No matter how big or small the business is, FSSAI license is required to be obtained. However the street vendors have very little knowledge about this requirement. Besides they fall short of the desired standards to be maintained to ensure food safety. Their perception of hygiene and food safety is varied with most of them not following proper operation procedures to ensure food safety. Training in food safety is the need of the hour and needs to be undertaken extensively by FSSAI. While the law has been put in place, implementation of the law as far as street vendors are concerned is a big challenge and can be overcome with a long term plan of training and retraining the street vendors on food hygiene and safety practices.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, with the aim of consolidating various acts and orders

related to food safety issues under different Ministries and Departments. FSSAI is an autonomous body established under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety. Standards framed by FSSAI are prescribed under FOOD Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Food Additives) Regulation 2011, Food Safety Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulation, 2011 and Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations 2011. FSSAI License is a pre requisite for starting any kind of food business. All those who are involved in food business must obtain a 14-digit registration or a license number that has to be prominently displayed. The objective is to ensure that food products undergo minimum quality checks in order to reduce any kind of food adulteration and improve the accountability of manufacturers.

The National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), has defined Street Vendor, as a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large without having a permanent built up structure from which to sell. Street vendors may be stationary, occupying a space on the pavement or other public or private spaces, or may be mobile and move from place to place carrying their goods on a push cart or a basket on their heads. There are about 10 million street vendors in India, of which more than half sell food on the streets. FSSAI has started registration of the street vendors since April 2014 across the country. The registration fee is currently Rs.100/-. FSSAI is also pro-actively working with the street vendors to train them on the minimum hygiene and food safety standards that are laid down by them. However there seems to be a lack of awareness and a casual approach amongst the street vendors which have a negative impact on the hygiene standards of their business unit.

### ➤ REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- *John E, Ehiri and George P. Morris, (1996)*, in their paper, “Hygiene Training and Education of Food Handlers: Does it work?” concluded that in spite of improving knowledge and understanding of epidemiology of food borne diseases and illnesses, efforts to reduce their impact on health and the economy have proved inadequate and their incidence is increasing. Most of the outbreaks are due to bad food handling practices which could be prevented by giving the food handlers proper training in food hygiene and safety. However the measuring the effectiveness of such training seems to be lacking and it is uncertain if this training has resulted in reducing incidences of food borne diseases. The paper presented a critical view of the effectiveness of hygiene training for food handlers at all the levels of the food chain and suggested ways to assure the practical utility of such training for food handling personnel.
- *Denise M. Rennie*, in his paper “Health Education Models and Food Hygiene Education”, states that education in food hygiene and safety will go a long way in improving food handling practices, resulting in food safety. However he states that there is a lack of documentary evidence of directly linking training with improved

food hygiene standards. While there is definitely an increase in the knowledge of food handlers regarding food hygiene and safety, whether it translates into improved food hygiene practices is difficult to measure and needs further evaluation though behavioral changes amongst the food handling personnel were more likely to occur if the settings approach to health promotion were to be adopted in the food premises.

- *Seema Shukla, Ravi Shankar and S.P. Singh*, in their paper, “Food Safety Regulatory Model in India”, state that considering the changing food safety standards and the stricter sanitary requirements, along with the improved global norms, there is a need to improve the legislative network in India especially since it is based on codex Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). Multiplicity of regulations result in hurdles that the food processing industry has to face making its growth difficult. FSSAI was established to integrate the food safety laws in India, in order to systematically and scientifically re-orient food processing and manufacturing industry from regulation to self-compliance. The study concludes that there is a holistic approach in the new scientific standard development and covers a wider range of products. However there is a gap in infrastructure and risk based approach in the implementation and enforcement. The study gives recommendations to improve the Indian legislative model.
- *Manisha Choudhury, Lipi B. Mahanta et al* in their research paper, “Will capacity building training interventions given to street food vendors give us safe food?: A cross sectional study from India, talks about the urgent need for a successful food hygiene training on safe food handling practices to be imparted to street food vendors as they are exposed to environmental hazards, especially since they come from a predominantly much weaker socio- economic background and yet cater to the general masses. A cross sectional study was conducted to evaluate the existing knowledge, attitude and practice regarding food safety and hygiene and comparing it with post training evaluation of the same parameters. They concluded that the knowledge level of the food vendors increased from an average of 24.35% to 66.20% after training interventions. The overall performance in terms of implementing better food hygiene practices showed an increase from 37.50% to 50.80%.
- *Elizabeth Walker et al* in their research paper, “Food handlers Hygiene knowledge in small businesses” found that 57% of the food handlers thought that they could tell if the food was contaminated with food poisoning bacteria by taste, smell and sight and 25% thought that bacteria multiplied at -10, 75 or 120 degree Celsius. 16% thought the correct temperature of the refrigerator was -18 degree Celsius or below. The study concluded that lack of minimum basic knowledge of hygiene could be a major barrier for effective implementation of HACCP in small food businesses.
- *Jan F. R. Lues, Mpeli R. Rasepei et al* in their research on “ Assessing Food Safety and associated food handling practices in street food vending”, investigated the street vendors in the city of Bloemfontein the assess the microbiological quality of the food being sold as well as the hygiene standards maintained during operations. A structured

questionnaire and checklist were used in interviews to evaluate the food handling practices. It was found that the overall quality of the food was within the acceptable safety limits although presence of specific microorganisms such as escherchia coli, staphylococcus aureus, salmonella and yeast pointed to a degree of ignorance amongst the food handlers towards proper hygiene practices.

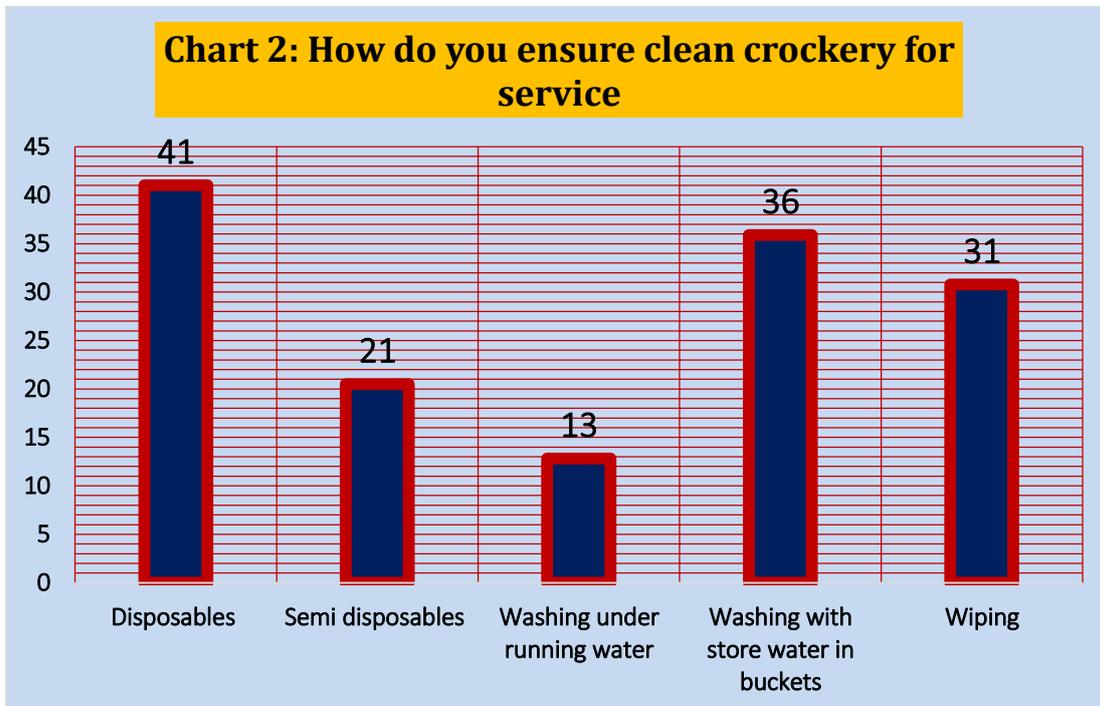
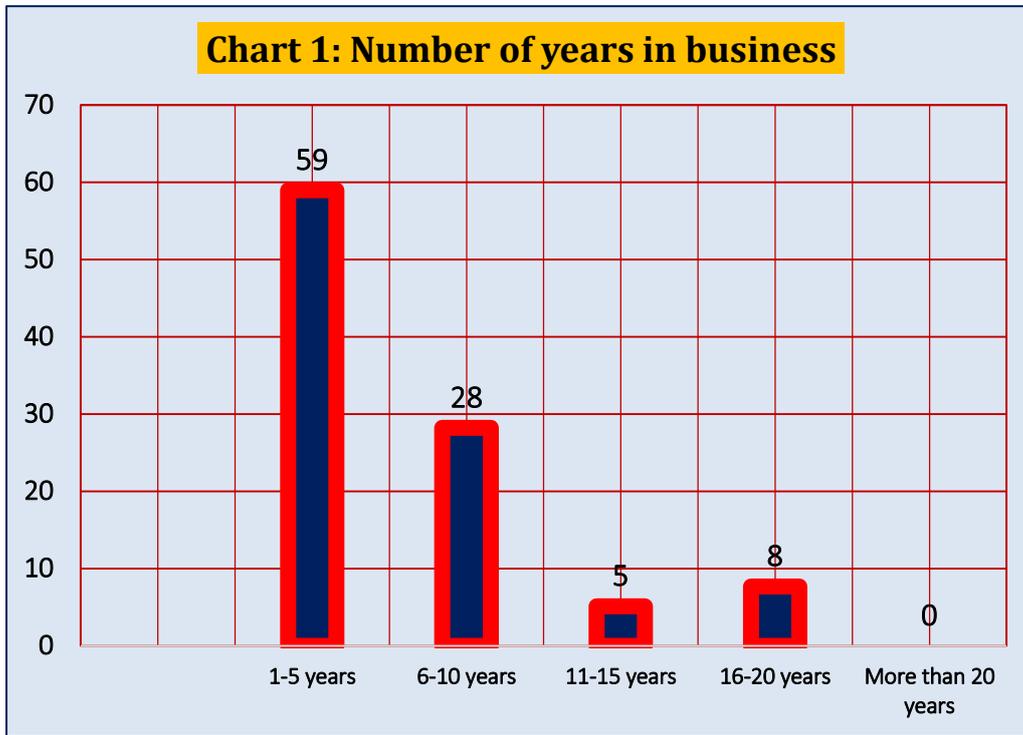
- Clayton D.A., *et al* in their research paper, “Food handlers’ beliefs and self-reported practices”, reported that despite an increase in the number of food handlers receiving training in food hygiene and safety, the number of food hygiene outbreaks is still high because of poor food handling practices. The paper used elements of social cognitive theory to examine the beliefs of food handlers’ self-reported practices. The findings were that the food handlers’ were aware of the general food hygiene activities but did not implement these in their operations due to lack of time and resources. Despite 95% of the food handlers’ receiving training in food hygiene, 63% admitted to not following hygiene practices since they perceived their business to be low risk although it was found that they did prepare high risk food. The research stresses the need for training to be based around a risk based approach and concludes that behavioral change will not occur only as a result on training but to be put in practice, adequate resources and a proper management culture is required.
- Roger E. Mitchell *et al* in their research paper “ Preventing Food Borne illnesses in food service establishments: Broadening the framework for intervention and research on safe food handling behaviours”, opined that unsafe food handling practices in the food service establishments greatly contribute to the transmission of food borne illnesses. Education and training interventions result in only a modest success in changing food service worker behavior. Management enforcement of policies, incentives for food handling, intensity and quality of training, safety procedures and protocol and appropriate equipment are some of the factors that will bring about a change in the worker behavior.
- M.B. Egan *et al* in their research paper, “A review of food safety and food hygiene training studies in the commercial sector” summarizes the methods and results of studies conducted worldwide to evaluate the effectiveness of training on food hygiene and safety in the commercial food industry. The review concluded that there is a need for development of evaluation criteria to measure the effectiveness of food hygiene and safety training interventions.

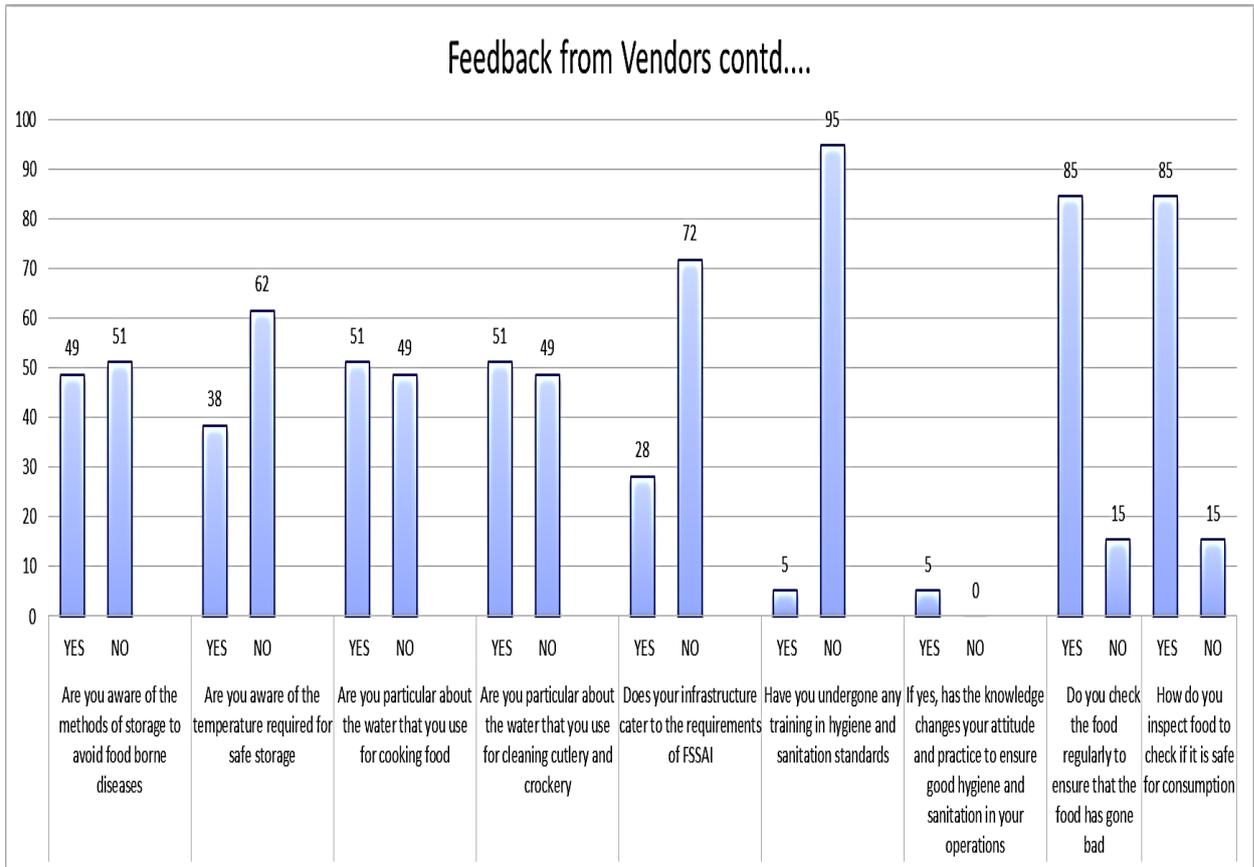
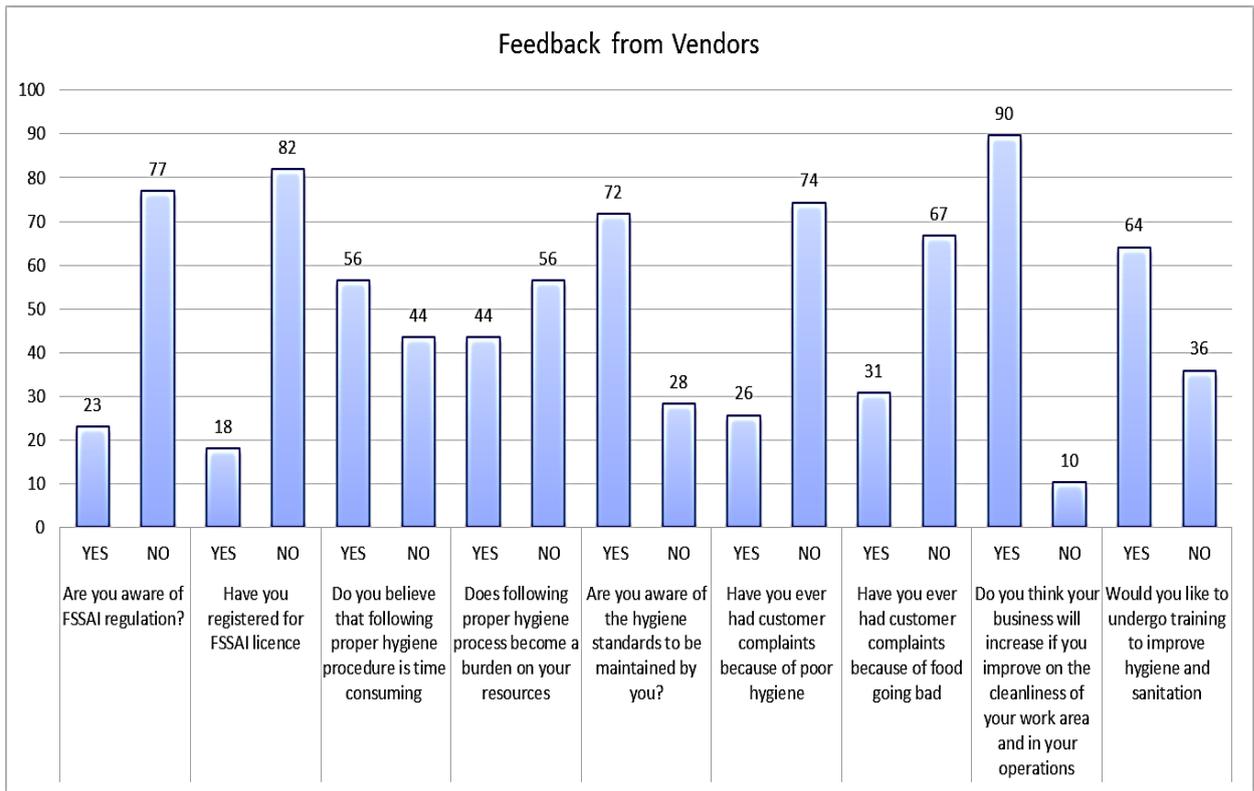
## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To find out if the street food vendors are aware of the FSSAI.
2. To find out if the street food vendors are aware of practices to ensure food hygiene and safety in food operations.

**III. DATA ANALYSIS**





#### IV. OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS

1. The awareness level of street vendors on FSSAI and its regulation is low and very few have registered for the license
2. The street vendors perceive that proper hygiene procedure is a time consuming process and a burden on the resources
3. The street vendors feel that they have enough knowledge on hygiene and food safety procedures.
4. The street vendors very rarely receive complaints on poor hygiene.
5. The street vendors do receive complaints about food being contaminated and going bad.
6. The vendors felt that their business would increase if they ensured proper cleanliness in their operations.
7. The street vendors were open to participating in training programs on food hygiene and safety.
8. The vendors did not have the knowledge about safe temperatures for storage of food.
9. The vendors felt that the water that they used for cooking as well as washing service equipment was clean. The vendors are aware that using disposables for service of food diminishes the probability of food contamination through poor hygiene
10. Most of the vendors were found to be using disposables for serving food as they felt that it was a safe choice to maintain good hygiene.
11. The few vendors that have undergone training on food safety seemed to have changed their attitude and are more prone to follow practices that ensure food hygiene and safety.
12. Vendors feel that they can detect food contamination by smelling and tasting the food.
13. Most of the vendors felt that their infrastructure was not as per the FSSAI regulations.

#### V. CONCLUSION

While the FSSAI is a single window for food hygiene and safety license for all categories of food businesses, the food street vendors need to be educated and made aware of the legal procedure to obtain FSSAI license to conduct business. Along with educating them on the procurement of license, the street vendors need to also undergo training on food hygiene and safety to ensure that they practice as per the standards laid down by the FSSAI. Their awareness on safe food storage and handling temperatures is found lacking and they need to be trained on this aspect of food science. The vendors depend on tasting and smelling the food to rule out food spoilage. Training on food borne illnesses and their prevention is therefore also recommended to ensure that spoilt food is not consumed. Certified training programs on all these aspects of food hygiene

and safety as a part of the FSSAI license procurement will increase the probability of the food vendors following proper food safety procedures.

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