

White lies & white frauds in Indian milk

It is official now. Indians are consuming adulterated milk containing detergent which not only has a very less nutritious value but is also health hazardous, a recent Government survey has revealed.

In its first-ever national survey on milk adulteration 2011, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) found that of the total 1,791 samples tested throughout the country, at least over 68 per cent i.e. 1,226 samples were either diluted with water or mixed with harmful detergent.

Adulteration was widely prevalent - in rural as well as urban areas - in packed and loose milk both, samples of which were tested in the Government's laboratories. The situation was worst in States like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and Mizoram where all the samples collected were found to be contaminated or not conforming to the standards.

Except Goa and Puducherry, where all the samples picked conformed to the standards, all other States including Delhi failed to meet the standards for milk. For instance, in Manipur 96 per cent samples were not conforming the standards, in Meghalaya it was 96 per cent, followed by Tripura (92 per cent), Gujarat (89%), Sikkim (89%), Uttarakhand (88%), Uttar Pradesh (88%), Nagaland (86%), Jammu & Kashmir (83%), Punjab (81%).

In Rajasthan it was 76% followed by Delhi (70%), Haryana (70%), Arunachal Pradesh (68%), Maharashtra (65%), Himachal (59%), Chandigarh (48%) among others.

The deviations were found highest for fat (%) and SNF (%) in 574 samples (46.8%) of the total non-conformity. Skim Milk Powder (SMP) was found in 548 samples (44.69%) which included presence of glucose in 477 samples.

"The snap shot survey was conducted with an aim to identify the common adulterants in milk in rural and urban areas in different states besides finding out the non-conforming samples in loose and packed milk throughout the country," said a senior official from the FSSAI.

He explained that reagents like salt and glucose are added to alter the thickness and viscosity. Adding starch prevents curdling of milk. Salt and detergents are added to adjust the lactometre reading to add thickness to the milk.

The survey has only proved how authorities concerned have failed to check this blatant violation of the standards for milk which is otherwise meant for strengthening bones, cardiovascular improvements and oral health.

FSSAI survey on adulteration

- Total non-conforming (NC) samples: 1226 (68.4%)
- In rural areas: 381(31%) including 64 (16.7%) packet samples and 317 (83.2%) loose samples
- In urban areas the total NC samples: 845 (68.9%) including 282 (33.3%) packed and 563 (66.6%) loose samples
- Addition of water reduces milk's nutritional value. Contaminated water and detergent pose health risk indicating lack of hygiene and sanitation in the milk handling. Immediate effect of drinking milk adulterated with urea, caustic soda and formalin is gastroenteritis but the long-term effects are far more serious (Pioneer 9-1-12).