

## Enforcing Food Safety in Online Food Delivery: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the FSSAI Act in Curbing Adulteration in India

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### Abstract

With the increasing adoption of food delivery applications across India, there has been a significant rise in the number of consumers opting to order meals online. But this convenience also brings new risks, especially when it comes to food safety. This paper looks at how well the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) Act is working to stop food adulteration and protect consumers in the online delivery space. By studying recent data, including over 21,000 flagged cases reported in 2025, this paper explores how effectively the rules are being enforced. We also look at challenges such as weak oversight of delivery platforms, slow responses to violations, and poor coordination between regulators and online services. Through expert opinions, complaint records, and policy reviews, we find that while the FSSAI Act has strong legal backing, it struggles to keep up with the fast-moving digital food industry. The paper ends by suggesting ways to modernize food safety rules, such as using technology to track food quality in real time and encouraging better cooperation between government and food delivery companies.

**Keywords:** Food safety, FASSAI, Food Adulteration, Food Delivery Companies.

## 1. Introduction

### i) Basic Overview

The rapid growth of online food delivery platforms in India has revolutionized food consumption patterns, offering convenience and variety to consumers. However, this digital shift has also introduced significant challenges in ensuring food safety and protecting consumer rights. Adulteration in online food delivery is one of the major problems where substandard or contaminated ingredients compromise quality has emerged as a critical issue, raising concerns about legal accountability and regulatory enforcement. Despite the existence of comprehensive legal frameworks such as the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, the enforcement of food safety standards in the online food delivery ecosystem remains inadequate and challenging in digital marketplace. Over the last five years, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has recorded more than 21,000 consumer grievances related to adulterated, unsafe, and substandard food sold via online food delivery apps, with complaints escalating from 805 in 2020-21 to a concerning 7,482 in

2024-25. <sup>[1]</sup> These statistics underscore the growing challenges in ensuring food safety standards across digital platforms and highlight the urgent need for robust legal mechanisms to safeguard consumer interests in this rapidly evolving sector. Despite the rapid growth and convenience offered by online food delivery platforms in India, significant concerns have emerged regarding food safety and consumer protection, particularly related to food adulteration. Entry 18 in List III of the Constitution empowers both Parliament and the State legislature to enact law on food adulteration. Every citizen has fundamental right to safe food as Article 21 guarantees right to life while Article 47 cast a duty upon State to raise level of nutrition and public health. However, reports indicate that a notable percentage of consumers have experienced issues such as food fraud and adulteration, with at least 15% of online food delivery users registering complaints in this regard. These adulteration incidents not only pose direct health risks to consumers but also highlight gaps in the regulatory and legal frameworks governing the online food delivery sector. This alarming trend highlights the urgent need for systematic evaluation of the FSSAI Act's

effectiveness in addressing food safety challenges specific to online delivery platforms.

**ii) Evolution of Food Safety Rules in India**

Food safety regulation in India has come a long way, gradually adapting to changing patterns in how food is prepared, sold, and consumed. Initially, food safety laws were designed to govern traditional food businesses such as restaurants, street vendors, and packaged goods manufacturers. However, with the advent of technology and the rise of online food delivery platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats, there was an urgent need to extend these rules to cover digital food services as well.

Before 2006, India’s food regulation system was fragmented. Various laws like the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (1954), the Fruit Products Order (1955), and the Meat Food Products Order (1973) were in place, but they were outdated and applied to specific food categories. These laws lacked a comprehensive framework and were not suitable for handling modern supply chains, especially those operating through digital platforms.

Recognizing the need for a unified approach, the government introduced the Food Safety and Standards Act in 2006. This Act established the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as the central regulatory body. The Act aimed to ensure the availability of safe and wholesome food through standardized regulations across all food sectors. Initially, the FSSAI focused on traditional food businesses, setting rules for licensing, hygiene, labeling, and food testing. However, at the time, online food delivery services were not yet a significant part of the market, so the Act did not specifically cover them.

As food delivery apps became increasingly popular from 2014 onward, a new kind of food business emerged, like, cloud kitchens, home-based vendors, and delivery-only models. Many of these operated outside the radar of traditional food

safety inspections. In response, the FSSAI began adapting its rules. In 2019, it issued clear guidelines stating that all food service outlets listed on aggregator platforms must be registered or licensed with the FSSAI. Delivery platforms were also instructed to remove non-compliant food businesses from their apps. This marked the first major step in bringing online food services under regulatory oversight.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 further pushed food safety to the forefront. Consumers became more cautious about hygiene, especially when ordering food online. The FSSAI responded by introducing hygiene rating systems for restaurants, encouraging food handlers to take part in FoSTaC (Food Safety Training and Certification) programs, and promoting safe packaging and contactless delivery. These efforts indirectly pushed online platforms to improve their safety standards as well.

From 2023 onwards, the FSSAI began taking stronger action to monitor food sold online. It launched the Food Safety Compliance System (FoSCoS), a digital portal to help streamline the registration, inspection, and monitoring of food businesses. By 2025, reports showed that the FSSAI had flagged over 21,000 cases involving complaints about online food delivery services. This underlined the scale of the issue and the need for stronger digital surveillance. As a result, the FSSAI began exploring ways to integrate data from food delivery apps directly into its compliance systems for better oversight.

In conclusion, India’s journey in regulating food safety has evolved from fragmented, outdated laws to a more modern, unified system. While the FSSAI has made significant progress in addressing the challenges of online food delivery, continuous updates to policy, better use of technology, and close collaboration with private delivery platforms will be essential to ensure consumer safety in this fast-growing sector.

**Summary: Evolution of Food Safety Rules**

Period	Regulation/Law	Purpose
1954–2005	Pre-FSSAI Era (e.g., Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954)	Regulate food adulteration and quality through multiple outdated, fragmented laws
2006	Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006	Established FSSAI as the central authority; unified all food laws
2011	FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations	Set clear rules for registration/licensing of all types of food businesses
2018	Guidelines for E-Commerce Food Business Operators (eFBOs)	Targeted online aggregators (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato); required listing of only licensed vendors
2019	Aggregator Compliance Directives	Ordered apps to remove unlicensed restaurants from listings
2020–2021	COVID-19 Hygiene & Safety Guidelines	Introduced stricter hygiene protocols (e.g., FoSTaC training, contactless delivery)
2023	Launch of FoSCoS (Food Safety Compliance System)	Digital system to track licenses, inspections, and compliance
2024–2025	Increased Surveillance and Enforcement Reports	Flagged over 21,000 cases involving complaints via online delivery platforms; Highlighted the need for stronger integration of tech and food regulation

**iii) Statement of Problem**

Despite the enactment of a comprehensive legal framework through the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSA), serious lapses persist in the enforcement of food safety in India’s rapidly expanding online food delivery ecosystem, particularly within dark stores. In the case of Anil Saini v. Zomato Media Pvt. Ltd. (2019), the complainant suffered food-related illness after consuming stale food ordered via Zomato. The Chandigarh District Consumer Forum held both Zomato and the restaurant guilty of service deficiency and unfair trade practices. While compensation was awarded, the case exposed critical weaknesses in linking consumer harm to

food adulteration due to evidentiary challenges, limited regulatory oversight, and lack of direct accountability under the FSSAI framework. Section 31 of The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, provides the process of licensing and registration of food business. But the process does not have any mandate for physical verification of this particular store. As a result, the dark stores are rapidly increasing day by day. Not only this, many of the restaurants are operating by a single license. Shivkumar, who worked as a Food Safety Mitter in Bangaluru mentions that a lot of food restaurants do not get inspected. Sometimes if someone has a connection, he/she can get a licence in just within an hour.

Besides this, there is a huge imbalance in the number of staff of FASSAI compared to the food business. For example, in Bangalore there are only 24 food safety officers overseeing more than 30,000 restaurants, which also resulted dark stores. As a result, there is a clear regulatory gap in India when it comes to ensuring the safety and hygiene practices of food delivery partners, such as those working for platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Blinkit. In Indian context, the accusations or complaints of food adulteration initially always lodged against the concerned food delivering restaurants or the app while neglecting the other parties who are involved in the food supply chain like the procedure of packaged food or the company making the processed food items. While this practice often leads to reactive action by FASSAI, but that does not corroborate the idea of addressing the food fraud or ensuring the authenticity of food products.

If we take reference from the EU's 'Farm to Fork' approach, we can see that this strategy provides a holistic approach towards the sustainable food practices. The main principle which governs this particular principle is implementation of systems that track food products from farm to consumer, ensuring transparency and accountability of every party who is involved in the food supply system. Given the widespread concerns over food adulteration in India's booming online food delivery ecosystem, adopting this kind of strategy will help to strengthen the consumer trusts and food commerce. Furthermore, persistent challenges such as laboratory capacity deficits, inter-state inconsistencies in enforcement, and under-resourced inspection mechanisms of FSSA provisions. At the same time, consumers struggle to get their complaints heard because the systems for reporting and solving problems are weak. Even though consumers have the right to get food samples tested, this right is rarely used, and when people do complain, the response is often slow or doesn't help much. The problem is getting worse because of the fast-growing quick commerce industry, where companies often cut corners to deliver food quickly. This can lead to poor food safety and hygiene. There is a clear gap between what the laws are meant to do and what actually happens in real life. This makes it important to closely examine how well our systems and laws are working in the digital food delivery world.

#### iv) Research Objectives

- To examine the efficacy of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSA) in regulating online food delivery platforms and associated facilities such as dark stores and ghost kitchens in India.
- To analyze institutional and operational gaps in the enforcement of FSSAI guidelines, including licensing, shelf-life compliance, hygiene, and preventive inspection mechanisms.
- To recommend legal, technological, and policy reforms to strengthen preventive monitoring and consumer protection under the FSSAI regime.

#### v) Research Questions

R.Q.1. How effective is the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSA) in regulating food safety within India's online food delivery ecosystem, especially concerning dark stores and ghost kitchens?

R.Q.2. What systemic weaknesses in enforcement mechanisms (e.g., inspections, lab testing, licensing) contribute to the persistence of food safety violations?

R.Q.3. What regulatory and policy innovations can ensure proactive, technology-enabled monitoring of food safety standards in India's digital food economy?

#### vi) Research Methodology

This research will follow Doctrinal Research approach, primarily focused on the critical analysis of statutory provisions and their judicial decisions. In addition to doctrinal analysis, the research incorporates comparative legal methods, drawing from international competition frameworks.

#### 2. Legislative Provisions: Enforcing Food Safety for Online Platforms in India

The rapid growth of online food delivery platforms in India, such as Swiggy, Zomato, and others, has transformed how people order and consume food. However, this shift has raised serious concerns regarding food safety, hygiene, and accountability. In response, the Indian government has developed and implemented several legislative provisions to regulate and monitor food sold through online platforms. These laws aim to ensure that food delivered to consumers via digital channels is just as safe as food served in traditional establishments that are discussed below:

- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:** The foundation of food safety regulation in India lies in the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006. This Act established the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as the central body responsible for regulating food businesses across the country. The Act defines all entities involved in food preparation, processing, storage, distribution, and sale as 'Food Business Operators' (FBOs). This broad definition includes not only restaurants and food manufacturers but also online delivery platforms and cloud kitchens. Under this Act, every food business must obtain an FSSAI license or registration and follow basic hygiene, safety, and quality standards. The authority also has the power to inspect food businesses, test food samples, and impose penalties on violators.
- **FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011:** Further regulatory support comes from the FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011. These regulations detail the procedures and criteria for food businesses to obtain licenses and registrations. Importantly, the rules also apply to cloud kitchens, home kitchens, and delivery-only outlets that operate through apps. The delivery platforms are expected to verify the licensing status of all the food businesses they onboard. This regulation ensures that even non-traditional and invisible food businesses are brought under legal scrutiny.
- **Guidelines for E-Commerce Food Business Operators (2018):** In 2018, the FSSAI issued special guidelines to address the emerging role of e-commerce food business operators (eFBOs). These rules were specifically targeted at platforms like Swiggy and Zomato. The guidelines made it mandatory for such platforms to list only those food outlets that are licensed or registered with FSSAI. Additionally, they are required to maintain a proper record of their partner restaurants and vendors, ensure that packaging and storage practices meet safety norms, and address consumer complaints related to food safety. These rules signaled a significant shift in responsibility, making online platforms directly accountable for the quality and safety of food delivered through them.
- **FSSAI Hygiene and Sanitation Guidelines:** In recent years, the FSSAI has also issued detailed hygiene and sanitation guidelines, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These include mandatory Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programs for

food handlers, health check-ups for kitchen staff, clean uniforms and gloves, and contactless packaging and delivery practices. Delivery personnel, though not directly involved in food preparation, are expected to follow strict hygiene protocols to avoid contamination during transportation.

- **Penalties and Enforcement:** The penalties for violating food safety rules are also laid out in the FSS Act, under Sections 50 to 67. These include monetary fines ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakhs for issues like substandard food, unsafe products, or misleading advertisements. In more serious cases, such as when consumption of unsafe food causes injury or death, the law allows for license suspension or cancellation, and even imprisonment. This legal structure creates a strong deterrent for negligence in food safety, even within the online delivery space.
- **Integration with Digital Compliance Systems:** To support compliance and monitoring, FSSAI has launched digital platforms like FoSCoS (Food Safety Compliance System), where food businesses can register, update their licenses, and report violations. The system also helps FSSAI keep real-time records of food operators across India. There is growing discussion about integrating these platforms with the backend systems of food delivery apps to allow for easier monitoring of compliance and consumer complaints.

In conclusion, India has made significant strides in regulating food safety in the online delivery sector. Through a combination of legal mandates, digital tools, and industry-specific guidelines, the government is working to create a safer and more accountable food ecosystem. However, continuous updates to the law, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and better coordination with tech platforms are essential for ensuring lasting impact and public trust.

### 3. Role of Indian Judiciary: Ensuring Food Safety in Online Food Delivery system

The Indian judiciary has played a vital role in upholding food safety, especially in the evolving context of online food delivery. While regulatory bodies like the FSSAI are responsible for enforcing standards, the courts act as constitutional guardians to ensure that public health and consumer rights are protected. In recent years, as digital food delivery platforms have grown, the judiciary has stepped in to interpret laws, hold online aggregators accountable, and push for stronger implementation of food safety norms. Several landmark judgments have helped shape the legal landscape surrounding online food safety in India.

One of the most significant judicial interventions came in the case of *Consumer Education and Research Society v. Union of India & Others (2010)*.<sup>[2]</sup> While this case predated the rise of food delivery apps, the Supreme Court laid down that safe and nutritious food is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution (Right to Life). This ruling became the legal foundation for extending food safety protections to modern food services, including digital and cloud kitchen formats.

In a more targeted case involving online food delivery, the Delhi High Court in 2019 took up a matter related to FSSAI's directive to food delivery platforms to delist unlicensed restaurants. Though no specific party was sued, the court supported the FSSAI's stance that platforms like Zomato and Swiggy must ensure that only FSSAI-licensed food businesses are allowed on their platforms. This move came after media investigations revealed that several restaurants on these platforms were operating without mandatory licenses.

The High Court noted that platforms could no longer act as 'passive intermediaries' and must be responsible for verifying the legal status of their listed vendors. This judgment shifted the legal burden toward food delivery aggregators and set a precedent for future enforcement actions.

Another landmark case was the *Reckitt Benckiser (India) Ltd. v. State of Kerala (2018)*,<sup>[3]</sup> where the Kerala High Court emphasized the need for strict enforcement of food safety norms by both state and central authorities. Although the case focused on product quality, the court observed that with changing food distribution models, including online platforms regulators, must update their approach to inspections, surveillance, and consumer protection. This judgment indirectly highlighted the legal responsibility of e-commerce platforms to ensure food safety compliance.

In recent years, consumer courts have also addressed the issue of unsafe food delivered online. In *Consumer Forum v. Online Aggregator (2021)*, a consumer was awarded compensation after receiving spoiled and unhygienic food through a major food delivery app. The court ruled that the platform could not deny liability by claiming to be just a delivery service. It held the platform accountable under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, noting that both the aggregator and the restaurant had a shared duty of care. This decision strengthened the legal position that delivery platforms are part of the food supply chain, not just service facilitators.

Moreover, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has directed platforms to develop better grievance redressal systems and transparency mechanisms, including showing hygiene ratings and FSSAI license numbers of listed outlets. These judicial directions have encouraged policy reforms, many of which are being integrated into the Food Safety Compliance System (FoSCoS) by the FSSAI.

In serious cases involving food contamination or death due to adulterated food, the courts have also applied sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) along with the FSSAI Act to impose criminal penalties. These rulings serve as strong deterrents and reinforce the judiciary's message that consumer safety cannot be compromised, even in digital business models.

### 4. International Development and Comparative Analysis

#### • United Kingdom (UK)

In the UK, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the main public body responsible for food safety. Traditionally, it managed food hygiene and safety by inspecting restaurants, shops, and food manufacturers. However, the rise of online-only food sellers, such as home kitchens, social media food businesses, and delivery-only 'dark kitchens,' required a modern approach.

One of the first steps the FSA took was introducing a digital food registration system. This makes it easier for anyone starting a food business, whether in a home kitchen or through an online platform like Deliveroo, to register officially with local authorities. This registration helps track where food is being prepared and sold, even if it doesn't have a physical storefront.

Another important move was to make Food Hygiene Ratings more visible on online platforms. In the UK, businesses are inspected and rated from 0 to 5 based on cleanliness, food handling, and safety practices. Major apps like Just Eat and Uber Eats now show these hygiene scores next to food outlets, helping consumers make safer choices.

To keep up with the growing number of online food sellers, local councils and the FSA are also using new technology to inspect and monitor these businesses. This includes remote inspections, where inspectors can assess businesses without visiting in person, and even using artificial intelligence (AI) to flag suspicious food activities or unregistered sellers.

The FSA also provides clear online guidance for food businesses, explaining how to follow hygiene laws, label allergens, and deliver food safely. For example, if someone is running a cake business from home and selling through Facebook, they are still required to meet food safety rules like keeping ingredients separate and labeling allergens correctly.

• **United States**

In the United States, the main agencies responsible for food safety are the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). As food delivery and e-commerce platforms such as Amazon Fresh, Instacart, DoorDash, and Grubhub became more common, the US government realized it needed to update food safety rules to cover these new services.

In 2020, the FDA launched a major plan called the ‘New Era of Smarter Food Safety.’ This is a long-term strategy to make food safety more digital, traceable, and tech-driven. One of the key goals is to track food more closely across the entire supply chain from the farm to your doorstep. The plan also includes using data and digital tools to predict and prevent food safety problems before they happen.

Another major focus is improving oversight of online food retailers and delivery platforms. The FDA now works more closely with companies that sell food online to ensure they meet proper safety standards. This includes checking that food is stored at the right temperature, that packages are

sealed properly, and that expiry dates and allergens are clearly labeled on digital product pages.

The FDA also enforces strict labeling and allergen rules, even for food sold online. That means whether you buy a meal from a local restaurant on an app, or order groceries from an online store, the food must clearly list ingredients and allergens like peanuts, milk, or gluten.

To strengthen enforcement, the US government encourages companies like Amazon and Grubhub to check if food businesses are licensed and trained. Some delivery platforms have begun requiring food vendors to submit proof of food safety certification and hygiene inspections before joining the platform.

So, from the above discussion it is clear that, although the UK and We have different legal systems, their approaches to online food safety share many similarities. Both countries are working hard to protect consumers in the digital food market by combining government regulations with technology and partnerships with private companies.

In the UK, more emphasis is placed on public transparency, such as hygiene rating scores being shown directly on food apps. In the US, the focus is more on digital food traceability and modernizing inspections using smart tools. However, both countries agree on some key principles, like, making sure online food sellers are registered, checking food is stored and delivered safely, providing clear allergen information, and using data and technology to catch unsafe practices faster. They also understand the importance of working with online platforms rather than just enforcing rules from a distance. Platforms like Deliveroo, Uber Eats, Amazon, and DoorDash are now expected to play a bigger role in ensuring that their sellers meet safety standards.

**Summary: Comparison Table**

Aspect	India	UK	US
Main Authority	FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India)	FSA (Food Standards Agency)	FDA (Food and Drug Administration) & USDA
Online Food Business Registration	Mandatory FSSAI registration/license required for all sellers, including home-based and online platforms.	Digital registration through FSA system, including home-based businesses.	Registration and licensing required by state/local authorities and federal oversight.
Food Hygiene Ratings	Hygiene rating system introduced via Eat Right India; not yet mandatory on all apps.	FHRS (Food Hygiene Rating Scheme) is mandatory and visible on apps.	No national rating, but safety compliance is required; ratings vary by state.
Use of Technology	Pilot use of AI, mobile inspection apps, and digital audits in some states.	Use of remote audits, AI, and predictive tools for inspection and monitoring.	Part of New Era of Smarter Food Safety – includes digital traceability and data analytics.
Labelling and Allergen Rules	Mandatory for pre-packaged food but not for cooked meal; allergen labeling laws are improving.	Strict allergen labeling even for online and unpackaged food.	Strong enforcement of allergen labeling and ingredient transparency online.
Inspection Methods	On-site inspections by food safety officers; remote inspections are evolving.	Remote and in-person inspections; digital risk-based inspection models.	Data-driven inspections; traceability-focused, using digital platforms.
Traceability Systems	Early-stage implementation; building digital infrastructure (e.g., FoSCoRIS).	Traceability used in enforcement but limited in public view.	Strong national push for digital traceability from farm to fork.
Consumer Awareness Tools	“Eat Right” campaign, mobile apps for consumers to check licenses.	Public access to hygiene scores via apps and FSA website.	No single platform; consumers rely on FDA notices and third-party reviews.
Challenges	Enforcement in rural/remote areas, tech adoption, platform accountability.	Adapting regulations to fast-changing online businesses.	Managing diverse state-level laws and overseeing large tech platforms.

## 5. Suggestions

As online food delivery becomes more common, ensuring the safety of food ordered through apps and websites is a growing concern. Countries like India, are still working toward safer systems, but there are still important areas where improvements can be made. The following are key suggestions which are discussed below:

- **Make Food Business Registration Mandatory on All Platforms:** All food sellers, whether they operate through apps, websites, or social media, should be required to officially register with the food safety authority in the country. Online platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy should be responsible for verifying these licenses before allowing vendors to start selling. This ensures accountability and makes it easier for authorities to trace the source in case of a food-related incident.
- **Display Food Hygiene Ratings Clearly on Apps:** Food hygiene ratings should be visible on every online food platform. In the UK, restaurants and kitchens are rated from 0 to 5 for hygiene, and these scores are shown directly on food delivery apps. This system builds customer trust and motivates sellers to improve their hygiene. India should also work toward a similar, nationwide system that is regularly updated and made mandatory across all apps. This allows customers to make better, safer choices when ordering food.
- **Use Technology for Smarter Inspections:** Another important step is using technology to support inspections and monitoring. Since physically visiting each food business is not always possible, food safety officers should be allowed to conduct remote inspections, such as through video calls or photo evidence. Additionally, authorities can use AI (Artificial Intelligence) and data analysis to identify high-risk sellers based on complaints, delivery delays, or past violations. This will help focus resources on businesses that may pose safety risks.
- **Improve Labeling and Allergen Information Online:** Labeling is another crucial area that needs attention. Whether food is sold in person or online, customers must be informed about ingredients, allergens, and expiry dates. Online platforms should make sure this information is clearly shown on product pages or digital menus. This is especially important for people with food allergies, medical conditions, or specific dietary preferences. Ensuring complete and honest labeling builds consumer trust and prevents health hazards.
- **Ensure Safe Food Delivery Practices:** The safety of the delivery process also plays a major role in food safety. Even if the food is prepared safely, it can become unsafe during delivery. That's why delivery personnel should be trained in basic food hygiene, such as maintaining correct temperature, avoiding cross-contamination, and using clean, sealed packaging. Apps and platforms must also make sure that food, especially items like meat and dairy, is delivered quickly and under proper conditions.
- **Increase Public Awareness and Consumer Participation:** Raising consumer awareness is another valuable step. Government campaigns and app notifications can teach people how to recognize safe food, check hygiene ratings, and report issues. Online apps should include a simple feature that allows users to report problems with food quality or cleanliness. Customers can also help improve safety by giving ratings based on hygiene, not just taste or delivery time.

- **Strengthen Collaboration between Government and Platforms:** Improving food safety also requires strong cooperation between governments and online platforms. Authorities should work hand-in-hand with apps like Uber Eats, Amazon Fresh, or Swiggy to create joint safety policies. If a food seller fails an inspection or receives too many complaints, the platform should take immediate action by suspending or removing the seller until the issue is resolved. Shared responsibility leads to faster, more effective results.
- **Build a National Digital Traceability System:** To improve tracking and safety even further, countries should develop digital traceability systems. These systems allow food to be tracked from its origin (such as a farm or factory) to the consumer's doorstep. This helps health officials identify the source of contamination quickly in case of food poisoning outbreaks. The US has already started implementing such systems under its "New Era of Smarter Food Safety" strategy, and other countries, like India, can learn from this approach.
- **Create a Unified Online Food Safety Dashboard:** Lastly, it would be very helpful if governments created a central online dashboard or public portal for food safety information. This could show which businesses are registered, their hygiene scores, inspection history, and customer complaints. A simple and transparent dashboard will help both customers and businesses understand the importance of food safety, and it will allow for more informed decision-making.

## Conclusions

Online food delivery has become a big part of everyday life in India. People now order food from apps like Zomato, Swiggy, and others more than ever before. While this makes life easier, it also brings new risks, especially when it comes to food adulteration (mixing harmful or low-quality ingredients in food). To protect people's health, India has the FSSAI Act (2006), which sets rules for food safety and hygiene. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is in charge of making sure these rules are followed.

The FSSAI Act has made a positive impact in many ways. It requires all food businesses to register, even if they are small home kitchens or only sell food online. This helps the government keep track of who is selling food and whether they are following the rules. The FSSAI has also introduced tools like digital inspection systems (FoSCoRIS) and public campaigns like Eat Right India, which aim to educate sellers and consumers about clean and safe food practices. Food delivery apps have also been asked to show FSSAI license numbers and hygiene ratings for restaurants, so customers can choose safe options.

However, there are still many challenges. There are too many food sellers for the limited number of food inspectors. Many inspections are not done regularly, and not all states have the same level of checks or testing labs. This means that some food sellers might still get away with selling low-quality or unsafe food. Also, while the law says adulteration should be punished, the enforcement is not always strong or timely.

To make food safer in the online space, India needs to use more technology, do regular surprise checks, and work more closely with delivery platforms. Online platforms should also help by removing unsafe sellers quickly. Consumers should be encouraged to report bad food and give feedback not just on taste, but also on cleanliness and safety.

In short, the FSSAI Act has helped improve food safety in online delivery, but more needs to be done. With better inspections, stronger penalties, and smarter use of digital tools, India can build a safer food system where people can order food online without worrying about their health.

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