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FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India)

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FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India)

FSSAI is the statutory body that sets food standards and licenses food businesses across India. It was created by the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The lesson covers its origin, structure, powers and licences. It also covers penalties, the 2026 testing network and a UPSC label question.

Must know: why FSSAI exists

1 Why was FSSAI created?

Before 2006, many separate laws and orders governed food. Different ministries enforced them. A trader could follow one rule and break another without knowing. One Act replaced them, so that one standard applies everywhere.

What does the Act do?



Union Health Minister at the First Health Ministers Roundtable on Food Safety and Nutrition, organised by FSSAI, New Delhi, 9 January 2018. Photo: Press Information Bureau, GODL-India, via Wikimedia Commons. Resized.

- The **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** received the President's assent on **23 August 2006**.
- It is described as an Act to **consolidate the laws relating to food**.
- It also created the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, called FSSAI, to lay down science-based standards.

Which older laws did it replace?

- The Second Schedule lists the **Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954** first.

- It also lists the Fruit Products Order 1955, the Meat Food Products Order 1973 and the Milk and Milk Products Order 1992.
- Other items are the Vegetable Oil Products (Control) Order 1947, the Edible Oils Packaging Order 1998 and the Solvent Extracted Oil Order 1967.
- The last entry covers any other food order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

What is the difference between the Act and FSSAI?

- The **Act** is the law. It was passed in 2006.
- **FSSAI** is the body the Act created. It started work later.
- Think of the Act as the rulebook and FSSAI as the referee.
- A common mistake is to say “FSSAI was passed in 2006”. The Act was passed. The Authority was set up by a notification.

When did FSSAI start work?

- FSSAI’s own disclosure records its establishment by notification **S.O. 2165(E) on 5 September 2008**.
- The Food Safety and Standards Rules were notified on **5 May 2011**.
- The principal Regulations followed on **5 August 2011**.
- The administrative ministry is the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Why does the ministry matter?

- Food touches agriculture, commerce and consumer affairs. Students often guess one of those ministries.
- The disclosure names **health**, because the aim is safe food for people.
- Remember it as “safe food is a health matter”.

Quick check 1. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 created FSSAI. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓



Three dates run from the Act to a working regulator. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources: fssai.gov.in

2 How is FSSAI built?

The Act itself fixes the shape of the Authority. Knowing the shape helps you answer “who sits on it” questions.

What kind of body is it?

- Section 4 makes it a **body corporate** with perpetual succession and a seal.
- It can sue and be sued in its own name.

- Its **head office is at Delhi**. It may open offices anywhere else in India.
- Because it is a body corporate, it can own property and make contracts. It is a legal person, not just a committee.
- Exam tip: learn the head office from the Act. Do not rely on a count of regional offices, because offices can be added under section 4(4).

Who sits on it?

- Section 5 gives a **Chairperson plus 22 members**. One-third of them must be women.
- **Seven members are ex officio.** They are not below the rank of Joint Secretary and come from seven ministries.
- Those ministries deal with agriculture, commerce, consumer affairs, food processing, health, legislative affairs and small scale industries.
- The Chairperson is an eminent food scientist or a senior administrator. The rank must be **not below Secretary** to the Government of India.

Why do seven ministries have a seat?

- Food safety cuts across many departments. A rule on pesticide residues touches agriculture, and a rule on labels touches consumer affairs.
- Having all seven at the table lets the Authority hear each view before it decides.
- Example: a new limit on a food additive affects farmers, factories and shoppers at once. The members from different fields can raise each concern.

Who runs it day to day?

- Section 9 provides a **Chief Executive Officer**, not below the rank of Additional Secretary.
- The CEO is the **Member-Secretary** of the Authority.

> **Quick check 2.** FSSAI's head office is at Mumbai. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Sources: fssai.gov.in

Good to know: powers, licences and testing

3 What does FSSAI do?

The law gives FSSAI one main duty and a list of powers. The duty is the “what”. The powers are the “how”.

What is its duty?

- Section 16(1) says it must **regulate and monitor** the manufacture, processing, distribution, sale and import of food.
- The aim is **safe and wholesome food**.

What can it set by regulation?

- Standards and guidelines for articles of food.
- Limits for additives, pesticide residues, heavy metals and similar substances.
- Rules for accrediting certification bodies and laboratories.
- Rules for imported food.
- **Food labelling standards**, including health and nutrition claims.

How does a standard reach the shop?

- Step one: the Authority makes a regulation, such as a limit for an additive.
- Step two: businesses must follow it. Laboratories test samples against it.
- Step three: the label must tell buyers what is inside.
- Example: if a regulation fixes a limit for a pesticide residue, a laboratory result above that limit shows a breach.

Does it advise the government?

- Yes. Section 16(3) tells it to give **scientific advice and technical support** to the Centre and the States.
- The advice covers policy and rules that touch food safety and nutrition.

> **Quick check 3.** Section 16(2) lets FSSAI set food labelling standards by regulation. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: fssai.gov.in

4 Who needs a licence?

The rule is simple. A food business needs a licence. A very small one only registers. The reason is fairness: a tea stall cannot carry the cost of a factory licence, yet its food must still be safe.

What does the Act say?

- Section 31(1) says no one may start or run a food business except under a **licence**.

- Section 31(2) exempts petty manufacturers, petty retailers, hawkers, itinerant vendors and temporary stall holders.
- They must still **register**.

What changed in 2026?

- An FSSAI order of 13 March 2026 revises the turnover thresholds from **1 April 2026**.
- Turnover **up to ₹1.5 crore** needs registration.
- Above ₹1.5 crore and up to ₹50 crore needs a **State licence**.
- Above ₹50 crore needs a **Central licence**.
- Earlier, the Licensing Regulations placed small businesses with turnover not above **₹12 lakh** in the registration group.

Worked example: which tier?

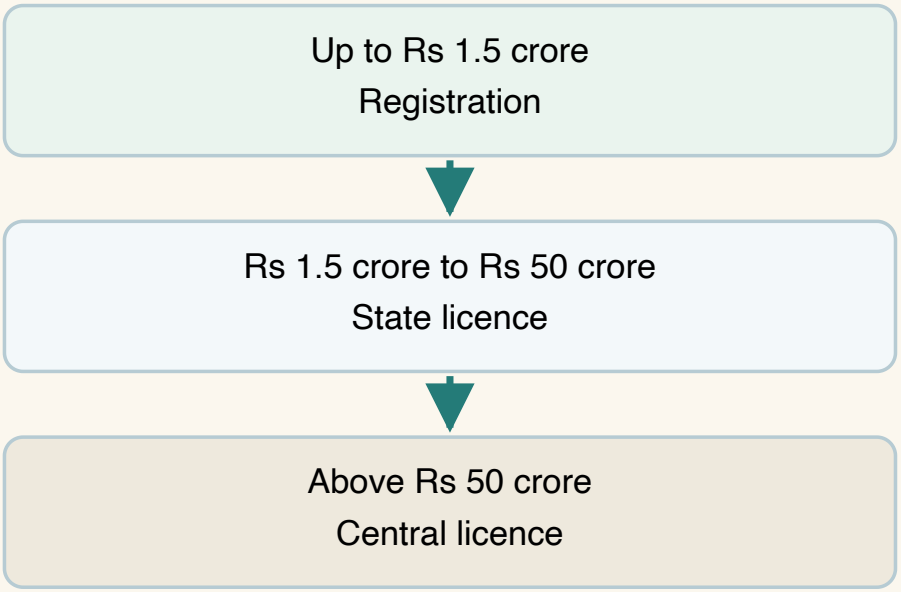
This example is only an illustration of how the thresholds work on turnover alone.

- A roadside juice stall with yearly turnover of ₹80 lakh is below ₹1.5 crore. It **registers**.
- A bakery with turnover of ₹4 crore is above ₹1.5 crore and below ₹50 crore. It needs a **State licence**.
- A large packaged-food maker with turnover of ₹120 crore is above ₹50 crore. It needs a **Central licence**.

What is the common mistake?

- Many students think registration is a “weaker licence”. It is a separate category for very small businesses.
- Another mistake is to remember the old ₹12 lakh limit. From 1 April 2026 the registration ceiling is ₹1.5 crore.

Quick check 4. From 1 April 2026, a food business with turnover above ₹50 crore needs a Central licence. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓



Turnover decides the tier. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources: fssai.gov.in; taxguru.in

5 How strong is testing?

Rules need laboratories. A reply in the Lok Sabha on 31 July 2026 gave the current numbers. Learn what each number counts, because exam options often swap them.



A food testing laboratory at the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, New Delhi. Credit: Press Information Bureau, GODL-India, via Wikimedia Commons. Resized.

What is in place?

- FSSAI has notified **259 NABL-accredited laboratories** for analysing food samples.
- It has also notified **24 Referral Food Laboratories**. These handle samples in appeal cases.
- Under **SoFTeL**, **47 State Food Testing Laboratories** have been upgraded.
- **34 microbiology laboratories** were set up separately.

What about mobile testing?

- **305 Food Safety on Wheels** vans are deployed across 35 States and Union Territories.
- They reach villages and remote areas where fixed laboratories are far away.

- The **Magic Box** kit detects common adulterants in **7** food commodities.
- The **DART** book describes **44** tests that anyone can do at home.
- **88 RAFT kits** have been approved so far. These are portable field-testing devices.

What does each number count?

- **259** counts NABL-accredited laboratories that FSSAI has notified. NABL is the body that accredits testing laboratories.
- **24** counts Referral Food Laboratories. These laboratories handle samples in appeal cases.
- **47** counts State laboratories upgraded under SoFTeL.
- **34** counts microbiology laboratories set up separately.
- **305** counts vans, not fixed laboratories.

Why vans?

- A fixed laboratory may be hundreds of kilometres from a village market.
- A van brings testing, training and awareness to the village itself.
- Example: the Magic Box kit lets a family test common adulterants in seven food commodities without a laboratory.

> **Quick check 5.** Where unsafe food causes death, the fine can be at most ₹1 lakh. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in; fssai.gov.in

Great to know: penalties and the exam link

6 What if food is unsafe?

Punishment grows with the harm done. The Act does not treat a stomach upset and a death in the same way.

What are the penalties in section 59?

- No injury: up to **three months** in prison and a fine up to ₹3 lakh.
- Non-grievous injury: up to **one year** and a fine up to ₹3 lakh.
- Grievous injury: up to **six years** and a fine up to ₹5 lakh.
- Death: at least **seven years**, which may extend to life, and a fine of at least **₹10 lakh**.

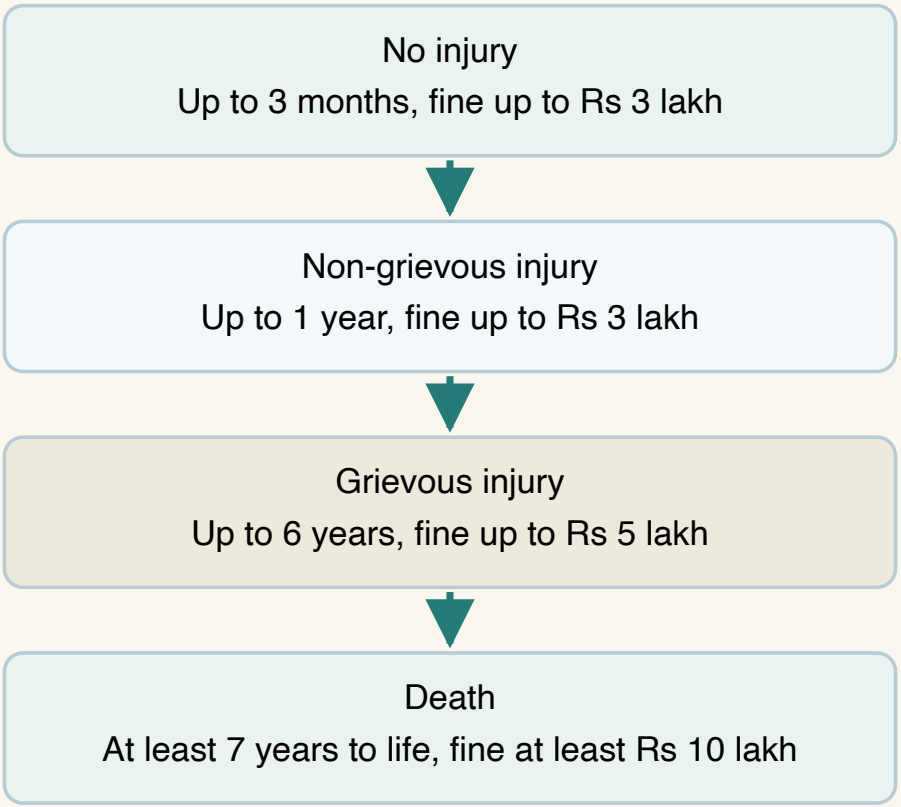
How do you remember the four levels?

- Use the pattern **3 months, 1 year, 6 years, 7 years to life**. The fines run **₹3 lakh, ₹3 lakh, ₹5 lakh, then ₹10 lakh**.
- Only the top level has a **minimum**: at least seven years and at least ₹10 lakh. The others give a maximum.

- Common mistake: students read the ₹10 lakh as a maximum. It is a floor.

Where does an appeal go?

- Section 70 lets the Centre or a State set up a **Food Safety Appellate Tribunal**.
- It hears appeals from decisions of the Adjudicating Officer.



The punishment rises with the harm. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources: fssai.gov.in

7 How did UPSC test labels?

The Civil Services Prelims 2016 asked about the label of a pre-packaged item. It is a good example of a “which is NOT required” trap.

What was the question?

- CSP 2016 GS Paper I, Question 34, asked what a manufacturer **must** put on the main label under the Packaging and Labelling Regulations, 2011.
- The statements were the list of ingredients including additives, nutrition information, medical recommendations about allergic reactions, and a vegetarian or non-vegetarian mark.

What does the official key say?

- The key for Series A gives **C**, which is statements 1, 2 and 4.
- Regulation 2.2.2 requires the **ingredient list**, **nutritional information** and the **veg or non-veg declaration**.
- Regulation 2.4.6 says a label must not carry words implying a **recommendation by the medical profession**.
- So statement 3 is not a required item.

How do you solve it?

- Check each statement against the rule. Statement 1 is required. Statement 2 is required. Statement 4 is required.
- Statement 3 sounds helpful, but the label may not imply medical approval.
- So only 1, 2 and 4 remain. That is option C.

Sources: upsc.gov.in; fssai.gov.in

8 Which traps should you avoid?

Exam writers swap names, offices and numbers. Watch these.

What is easy to confuse?

- FSSAI is under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, not Consumer Affairs or Agriculture.
- Its head office is at **Delhi**, by section 4(3).
- The **Right to Information Act, 2005** is not one of the laws the Food Act replaced.
- The turnover limit for registration is now **₹1.5 crore**, not the old ₹12 lakh.

What are the common misconceptions?

- “FSSAI is a ministry.” It is a statutory authority under the Health Ministry.
- “The old food laws still run beside it.” The Second Schedule shows they were replaced.
- “More vans means more laboratories.” Vans are a separate count from the 47 State laboratories.
- “A fine of ₹10 lakh is the top.” In a death case it is the lowest fine.

What should you remember?

- Act in 2006. Authority notified in 2008. Rules and Regulations in 2011.
- Penalty for death: at least seven years and ₹10 lakh.

Sources: fssai.gov.in

9 Unsafe food in 2026: what do the numbers say?

Food safety was in the news through 2026. This card collects the figures and the cases. Learn the numbers with their meaning, not alone.

How many samples failed?

- Provisional 2025-26 figures, given to the Rajya Sabha on 28 July 2026, show **2,23,808 samples** tested.
- Of these, **40,023 were non-conforming**. That is about **17.88%**.
- “Non-conforming” covers every failure to meet a standard, including adulteration. The data do not show how many samples were unsafe.
- Enforcement followed: **31,878 civil penalty cases** and **1,918 convictions**.
- Compare milk. A 2023 national survey tested 10,126 samples from 756 districts. About 98% were found safe for consumption.

What happened with spices?

- On 5 April 2024, Hong Kong flagged ethylene oxide in three MDH mixes and one Everest mix. Importers recalled them.
- Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest product on 18 April 2024.
- FSSAI tested 34 factory samples, 25 MDH and 9 Everest. It found no ethylene oxide in any of them.
- Its order of 8 April 2024 set a fallback limit of **0.1 mg/kg** for spice residues. It applies to a pesticide that is not registered, or one with no Indian or Codex limit for spices.
- In October 2026, a batch of Everest cumin powder was recalled in Goa as unsafe.
- Before Holi 2026, an FSSAI letter of 19 February asked States to run a drive on milk products, sweets and edible oils.

- The lesson: recalls follow testing, and testing follows a fixed limit.

What does the law say about unsafe food?

- Under **section 59(i)** of the FSS Act, unsafe food that causes no injury can bring up to **3 months** in jail and a fine up to **₹3 lakh**.
- Injury, grievous hurt or death bring higher penalties under the other clauses of section 59.
- The Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 cut this penalty from 6 months and ₹1 lakh to the figures above.
- The Jan Vishwas Act, 2026 made smaller changes to the food law. It did not change section 59.

What is the court case?

- On 14 October 2026, the Delhi High Court heard a PIL on analogue paneer. This is a cheaper substitute made with vegetable fat.
- The Court issued **notice only** to the authorities and FSSAI. It asked for replies and has not decided anything.
- Exam tip: do not write that the Court “banned” or “ordered” anything. Say notice was issued.

Can the system test this much?

- In February 2026, FSSAI reported **246 NABL-accredited primary laboratories** and 24 referral laboratories.
- It also reported **305 Food Safety on Wheels** mobile labs in 35 States and Union Territories.
- **Eat Right India** is the wider campaign. It began in July 2018 and promotes safe, healthy and sustainable food.

So what for Mains? A high failure rate shows both weak supply chains and stronger testing. Argue both sides. Then name one fix, such as more labs or faster penalties.

> **Quick check 6.** every non-conforming food sample is unsafe to eat. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Quick check 7.** the Delhi High Court has only issued notice on the analogue-paneer PIL. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in; fcainfoweb.nic.in; cfs.gov.hk; sansad.in; indianexpress.com; dip.goa.gov.in; fssai.gov.in

Review the feedback after each answer. The understanding-check score lasts for this page session. Reset the checks when you want another attempt. This score is separate from the Native Practice score below.

Questions to think through

Why have one regulator instead of many food laws?

With many laws, a business answered to many ministries with different rules. One Authority means one standard, one licence process and one place to hold accountable.

Why does the penalty rise with the harm?

The law treats a death very differently from no injury. Higher harm brings longer prison terms and higher fines, so the punishment fits the damage.

Why do tiny sellers only register?

A hawker cannot meet the cost of a full licence. Registration still puts the seller on record, so safe food remains the duty. The seller must still follow the safety rules.

Why does the Act let FSSAI advise the States?

States run most laboratories and enforcement. Advice from one expert body keeps standards the same across the country.

Practice MCQs

1. Under which Act was the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) established?

A. Essential Commodities Act, 1955

B. Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954

C. Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

D. Consumer Protection Act, 2019

See answer ↓

2. Which ministry is FSSAI's administrative ministry?

A. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

B. Ministry of Commerce and Industry

C. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

D. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

See answer ↓

3. Where is FSSAI's head office located, and how many regional offices does it have?

A. 6 regional offices; head office in Delhi

B. 4 regional offices; head office in Mumbai

C. 8 regional offices; head office in Chennai

D. 2 regional offices; head office in Kolkata

See answer ↓

4. Which of these was NOT one of the earlier food-related laws that the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 consolidated?

A. Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954

B. Right to Information Act, 2005

C. Milk and Milk Products Order, 1992

D. Meat Food Products Order, 1973

See answer ↓

5. In 2026, FSSAI raised the turnover threshold for the simpler "Basic Registration" category of food businesses. What did this threshold change from and to?

A. From ₹12 lakh to ₹1.5 crore

B. From ₹5 lakh to ₹20 lakh

C. From ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore

D. From ₹20 lakh to ₹1 crore

See answer ↓

6. As of a 31 July 2026 Lok Sabha reply, how many Mobile Food Testing Laboratories ("Food Safety on Wheels") are deployed across India?

A. 47

B. 88

C. 305

D. 259

See answer ↓

7. Under FSSAI's SoFTeL scheme, how many State Food Testing Laboratories have been structurally upgraded with advanced analytical equipment?

A. 24

B. 34

C. 47

D. 88

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The answer is the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The Act received assent on 23 August 2006 and created FSSAI. The Essential Commodities Act and the Consumer Protection Act do not set up FSSAI. The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 is the old law that the new Act replaced. Hook: the 2006 Act is the new law, and the 1954 Act is the old one. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** The answer is the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. FSSAI's own disclosure names it as the administrative ministry. Consumer Affairs, Commerce and Agriculture are wrong, even though food touches all three. Hook: food safety sits with health. ↑ Q2
3. **A.** The answer is the option that places the head office in Delhi. Section 4(3) of the Act fixes it there, and section 4(4) lets FSSAI open offices elsewhere. The options naming Mumbai, Chennai or Kolkata as head office are wrong. Learn the head office, not the count of regional offices. Hook: head office Delhi, other offices as needed. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** The answer is the Right to Information Act, 2005. The Second Schedule of the Food Act lists the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, the Meat Food Products Order, 1973 and the Milk and Milk Products Order, 1992. The RTI Act is a transparency law and was not replaced. Hook: food laws were replaced, the transparency law stays. ↑ Q4
5. **A.** The answer is a rise from ₹12 lakh to ₹1.5 crore. From 1 April 2026, turnover up to ₹1.5 crore needs only registration. The older Licensing Regulations used ₹12 lakh. The other ranges are not in either source. Hook: 12 lakh becomes 1.5 crore. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** The answer is 305. The Lok Sabha reply of 31 July 2026 gave 305 Food Safety on Wheels vans across 35 States and Union Territories. The figure 259 is the count of NABL-accredited laboratories, and 47 is the count of upgraded State laboratories. The figure 88 is not the van count. Hook: 305 wheels, 259 labs, 47 State labs. ↑ Q6
7. **C.** The answer is 47. Under SoFTeL, 47 State Food Testing Laboratories were upgraded, as stated on 31 July 2026. The option 34 is wrong because it counts the separate microbiology laboratories. The options 24 and 88 are not the upgrade count. Hook: 47 upgraded, 34 microbiology. ↑ Q7

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The Act created the Authority. ↑ 1
2. **False.** this is false. Section 4(3) puts the head office at Delhi. ↑ 2
3. **True.** Labelling standards are on the list in section 16(2). ↑ 3
4. **True.** The order sets the Central licence above ₹50 crore. ↑ 4
5. **False.** this is false. The fine is at least ₹10 lakh and the prison term at least seven years. ↑ 5
6. **False.** this is false. Non-conforming means the sample failed a standard. It can be a label or quality failure, not always a safety failure. ↑ 6
7. **True.** this is true. The Court issued notice only and has not decided the PIL. ↑ 7

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