



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Unblemished white: Ensuring milk purity from grass to glass

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Kishore Indukuri June 21, 2022

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India stands tall in the world today for many reasons. Not least among them is the fact that we are today the largest milk producer globally, contributing to more than 23 percent of the global milk supply. The market for dairy products is very significant both in size and in quality dimensions and contributes five percent to the economy and has grown at a CAGR of 6.4 percent over the last five years. It is, therefore, crucial, that milk, and other value-added products (VAP) not only reach every corner of the country but aid in enhancing the overall health of its citizens. With the World Milk Day just behind us, on June 01, it may be worthwhile to recall the White Revolution and its impact on transforming the dairy industry to its position of strength today.

While the organised dairy industry is poised to grow at 12 percent in revenue this financial year to reach Rs 1.6 lakh crore, concerns over quality and purity still remain foremost in the minds of consumers. FSSAI has set out rigorous standards for milk and VAP quality, but regrettably, many in the industry seem to fall short on these benchmarks with tragic regularity, if media reports are anything to go by. It is important that milk and other dairy products meet the set quality standards and do so at all stages of the supply chain—from the grass to the glass.

The bane and a very unfortunate aspect of our dairy industry today is the prevalence of adulterants and anti-biotics in many instances. Sadly, many unscrupulous players, in order to promote the growth and wellness of livestock, use various types of antibiotics and hormones in quantities beyond the tolerance limits set by FSSAI. This impure and low-quality, unprocessed milk has been known to cause diseases such as diabetes, kidney and liver disease, heart diseases, autism, and even schizophrenia. Adulterants often result in skin diseases and may even cause cancer. Modern manufacturers and the best industry players employ the most technologically advanced and highest stringent standards of safety practices to ensure that only

unadulterated and pure milk reaches the consumer. These steps and processes commence right from the procurement stage and continue till the milk reached the table of the customer.

To ensure that the highest quality standards are achieved, the process must start right from the procurement stage itself. In fact, there are, as best practices in quality assurance for dairy products go—and we follow this to the ‘T’—four levels of testing to ensure and deliver dairy products with zero preservatives, additives, antibiotics, hormones, or any other adulterants. The first level is the collection stage or sourcing, then the cold chain stage, followed by processing, and lastly, the delivery to customer.

Farmers / milk producers should be trained and tested in the quality standards and milk procurement must pass through stringent tests to ensure absence of chemicals and presence of stipulated constituents. It is critical to ensure absence of harmful antibiotics such as beta lactams, sulphonamides, and tetracyclines in addition to other chemicals such as oxytocin, peroxides of hydrogen, urea, starch, and so on. In fact, the best direct-to-consumer milk companies are known to perform as many as 6,500+ tests daily on their sourced milk to adhere to the FSSAI stipulations of 45 testing parameters. The best organizations will also test for factors such as fat type and content to ensure best milk quality, and ensure highest purity levels through SNF testing, alcohol stability (used on fresh milk to indicate whether it will coagulate on heating), MBRT (Methylene Blue Dye Reduction Test, used as a quick method to assess the microbiological quality of raw and pasteurized milk), and COB tests (clot on boiling test, a test done with an inspection of the warmth stability of milk through processing) on every batch of milk before it reaches the consumers.

In the final analysis, transparency and dedication will be the two determinants of how successful the purity and quality assurance systems are. For the dairy industry, it is important that customers and consumers know and participate in this process. This is possible through information sharing, ensuring a seamless feedback mechanism, and connecting proactively with all stakeholders of the supply chain, end to end. To ensure this, conscientious players should regularly publish test reports on their products to share with customers including data on rejection quantities per day due to failing to meet quality standards and inviting feedback through a variety of contact sessions both on and off-line.

The Indian milk industry is a movement that has revolutionized the livelihoods of millions in the agrarian sector, its linkages to consumers and to the future of our nation are deep and unassailable. With purity and quality becoming mainstream, the industry will only grow and prosper adding to nation wealth and our future and present health as well.

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