



Food Safety – The Report (2026)

KERALA.HEALTH

COMMISSIONERATE OF FOOD SAFETY, KERALA

MESSAGE

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, has emerged as a key public health institution safeguarding the health and well-being of citizens through a comprehensive, science-based, and technology-enabled food safety ecosystem. This document presents a structured overview of the department's evolution, institutional framework, regulatory functions, enforcement activities, laboratory strengthening, and citizen-centric initiatives undertaken across the State.

The Food Safety Department undertakes their core functions as well as integrated approach along with the Health Department to ensure popularization of healthy food habits. Unless we change behaviour of people and their food habits the disease control activities will be ineffective.

Over the years, Kerala has made significant progress in strengthening food safety governance through integrated enforcement, digital regulatory systems, NABL-accredited laboratories, mobile food testing infrastructure, and large-scale public awareness initiatives. The department's proactive interventions, risk-based inspections, surveillance systems, and special enforcement drives have substantially enhanced consumer protection and strengthened public confidence in food safety mechanisms. The Department have taken the role to do proactive interventions with masses along with their statutory regulatory functions.

I am confident that this publication giving information of the functioning of the Department will serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, administrators, public health professionals, and stakeholders in the food ecosystem. It reflects Kerala's continued commitment towards building a responsive, accountable, and resilient food safety system that upholds the principle of "Safe Food for Healthy Life."

I congratulate the entire team of officers and staff of the department guided by success Commissioners Shri Vinod IAS and Ms Afsana Perween IAS whose dedicated efforts have contributed to the development of this the department and various field activities.

Rajan Khobragade
Addl Chief Secretary
Health and Family Welfare

MESSAGE

Ensuring access to safe, hygienic, and nutritious food is fundamental to protecting public health and strengthening community well-being. The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, continues to work towards this objective through coordinated enforcement, scientific surveillance, laboratory services, public grievance redressal, and sustained community engagement across the State.

This document captures the major activities and achievements of the department during the financial year, including inspections, food sampling, prosecution and adjudication, special enforcement operations, microbiological testing expansion, and citizen-focused digital initiatives. The strengthening of laboratory infrastructure, Food Safety on Wheels services, and technology-enabled grievance systems has further improved the department's responsiveness and regulatory reach.

The achievements documented in this report reflect the collective commitment and dedicated efforts of Food Safety Officers, laboratory personnel, technical teams, and all stakeholders associated with the food safety ecosystem in Kerala. I congratulate the officers, staff, and leadership of the department for their contributions in preparing this publication and for their sustained efforts in strengthening food safety governance in the State. I hope this document will further support institutional learning, public awareness, and continued improvement in food safety compliance and consumer protection.

Ms Afsana Parveen
Commissioner

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 History and Evolution of the Department	5
1.3 Key Milestones and Development Over Time	6
1.4 Vision and Mission	9
CHAPTER 2	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 LICENSING AND REGISTRATION OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS	10
2.3 FOOD SAMPLING	12
2.4 INSPECTION OF FOOD BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS	16
2.5 PROSECUTION, ADJUDICATION AND ENFORCEMENT NOTICES	19
2.6 PUBLIC GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL SYSTEM	23
2.7 OPERATION LIFE — SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT DRIVES	27
2.8 FESTIVAL AND PILGRIMAGE ENFORCEMENT	34
2.9 FOOD SAFETY TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION (FoSTaC)	39
2.10 EAT RIGHT INDIA — INITIATIVES IN KERALA	41
2.11 STATE AND DISTRICT-LEVEL INITIATIVES	45
2.12 INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (IEC)	47
2.13 Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 3	50
3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 ADMINISTRATIVE WING	50
3.3 ENFORCEMENT WING	53
3.4 ANALYTICAL WING	56
3.5 District Food Testing Laboratory, Pathanamthitta	63
3.6 Food Safety on Wheels — Mobile Food Testing Infrastructure	63
3.7 Laboratory Services for Private and Public Sector Clients	64
3.8 Year-wise Sample Analysis — State Food Testing Laboratories	66
3.9 Conclusion	67
CHAPTER 4	69
4.1 Introduction	69
4.2 National Recognition — First in National Food Safety Index	69

4.3 Major Achievements at a Glance — Financial Year 2024-25	70
4.4 National Firsts and Landmark Distinctions.....	72
4.5 Revenue Generation and Financial Performance	74
4.6 Inspections and Enforcement Surveillance.....	75
4.7 Food Sampling — Enforcement and Surveillance	76
4.8 Licensing and Registration of Food Business Operators	77
4.9 Prosecution and Adjudication — Regulatory Deterrence.....	77
4.10 Consumer Awareness, Community Programmes, and State Initiatives	78
4.11 Eat Right Initiatives — Supply-Side and Demand-Side Interventions.....	80
4.12 Special Task Force — Intelligence-Led Enforcement	82
4.13 Strengthening of Analytical Infrastructure	82
4.14 District-Level Success Stories — Innovative Campaigns	85
4.15 Conclusion.....	86
CHAPTER 5	88
5.1 Introduction	88
5.2 State Plan Fund — Allocation and Utilization	88
5.3 State Non-Plan Fund — Allocation and Utilization	90
5.4 Central MOU Fund — Allocation and Utilization	91
5.5 Consolidated Financial Overview and Highlights	93
5.6 Way Forward.....	94
5.7 Conclusion.....	95

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT

1.1 Introduction

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, stands as the primary regulatory authority responsible for ensuring the safety, quality, and wholesomeness of food consumed by the citizens of the State of Kerala. Operating under the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Kerala, the Commissionerate functions with the overarching mission of making "Safe Food for Healthy Life" a lived reality for every resident of the State. The department's work spans the entire food supply chain — from farm to fork — encompassing licensing, enforcement, surveillance, laboratory analysis, consumer awareness, and capacity building.

1.2 History and Evolution of the Department

1.2.1 The Pre-Legislative Era and the Need for Unified Food Law

The history of food safety regulation in India dates to the pre-independence era when individual states and provinces enacted their own fragmented legislation to address food adulteration. Laws existed in a number of States in India for the prevention of adulteration of foodstuffs, but they lacked uniformity, having been passed at different times without mutual consultation between States. This absence of a uniform national framework created significant barriers to interstate food trade and made enforcement inconsistent across jurisdictions.

The need for central legislation was recognised as early as 1937, when a committee appointed by the Central Advisory Board of Health recommended the enactment of a comprehensive, all-India law on food safety. The matter gained further constitutional footing when food adulteration was included in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India, enabling Parliament to legislate on the subject.

1.2.2 The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 (PFA Act)

Responding to the pressing public health challenge of widespread food adulteration in post-independence India, the Parliament enacted the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. The Act was published as Act No. 37 of 1954 on 30th September 1954 and came into force from 1st June 1955. Since its enactment, the PFA Act was amended thrice — in 1964, 1976, and 1986— to keep pace with evolving public health needs and food industry developments.

Under the PFA Act, food inspectors were empowered to conduct inspections, draw samples, and initiate prosecution against violators. Public Analysts appointed by State Governments were responsible for laboratory analysis of food samples. In Kerala, food safety functions under the PFA Act were carried out through the Health Department, with Food Inspectors operating under the Local Health Authorities across the State.

While the PFA Act served the country for over five decades, unlike the penal-oriented PFA Act 1954, a new Act was needed to achieve food safety through self-regulation and thereby promote discipline in the Food Business Industry.

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 — A Paradigm Shift

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 was promulgated by Parliament for the unification of food laws in the country and also for timely, innovative changes in the regulatory mechanisms. This landmark legislation consolidated a multiplicity of food-related laws under a single, comprehensive statute, marking a transformative shift from a purely punitive regulatory model to one grounded in science-based standards, self-regulation, and shared responsibility across the food supply chain.

With the advent of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, all other food laws were nullified and uniformity was brought in to ensure the quality and safety of food throughout the country. Chapter 4 of the FSS Act designated the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as the apex body to exercise the powers conferred on, and to perform the functions assigned to it, under the Act.

Section 30 of the FSSA further mandated the constitution of a Commissionerate of Food Safety in every State for the efficient implementation of food safety standards and requirements under the Act and the rules and regulations framed thereunder.

1.2.4 Establishment of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala (2009)

Accordingly, a Commissionerate of Food Safety was constituted in the State of Kerala in July 2009. This marked a defining moment in the history of food regulation in the State — transforming the earlier, fragmented enforcement structure into a dedicated, institutionalised Commissionerate with a clear mandate, organised administrative hierarchy, and dual-wing operational structure.

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, comprises two wings — an Enforcement Wing and an Analytical Wing — working in tandem to regulate and monitor the food industry. The Enforcement Wing focuses on inspections, licensing, surveillance, and legal action, while the Analytical Wing operates the State Food Testing Laboratories to provide scientific backing to enforcement activities.

1.3 Key Milestones and Development Over Time

The journey of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, since its establishment in 2009 has been marked by progressive institutional strengthening, infrastructure development, and recognition at the national level. The key milestones are documented below:

1957 — Establishment of the First Analytical Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram

The inception of the first analytical laboratory at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala in 1957 marked a milestone in the State's commitment to food safety. [Food Safety Kerala](#) This laboratory laid the foundational scientific infrastructure for food sample testing in the State under the PFA Act regime.

1975 — Expansion of Laboratory Network

In 1975, the establishment of two additional laboratories at Ernakulam and Kozhikode further strengthened the capabilities of the Food Safety Department. [Food Safety Kerala](#) These three regional laboratories collectively formed the backbone of the State's food testing network, covering the southern, central, and northern zones of Kerala respectively.

2009 — Constitution of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala

The Commissionerate of Food Safety was formally constituted in July 2009 under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. This institutional milestone transformed food safety governance in the State from a departmentally embedded function to a dedicated Commissionerate with its own organisational structure, leadership, and mandate. This was a critical step in aligning Kerala's food safety framework with the national regulatory architecture under FSSAI.

2013 — Full Operationalisation under FSSA, 2006

Since 2013, the State Food Testing Laboratories have been working in full capacity to realise the analytical capabilities mandated under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. This transition ensured that testing methodologies, standards, and reporting protocols were brought in line with the more advanced and comprehensive requirements of the FSSA, which addressed evolving challenges in the food industry including pesticide residues, contaminants, microbiological hazards, and food additives.

2016 — NABL Accreditation of Ernakulam Regional Analytical Laboratory

The Ernakulam laboratory achieved a significant milestone in 2016 by obtaining NABL accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories. [Food Safety Kerala](#)

This accreditation underscored the laboratory's commitment to international standards of precision, reliability, and analytical competence.

2017 — NABL Accreditation Extended to Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode Laboratories

In 2017, the laboratories at Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode also secured NABL accreditation, demonstrating their commitment to excellence in testing and calibration [Food Safety Kerala](#), and bringing all three regional State Food Testing Laboratories under the NABL-accredited framework.

2019 — NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment — A National First

When FSSAI mandatorily pressed for NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment, the Ernakulam Regional Analytical Laboratory achieved this status in 2019 and became the first State Food Testing Laboratory in India to achieve this distinction. [Food Safety Kerala](#) This placed Kerala's analytical infrastructure at the forefront of food safety science in the country.

2022-23 — Landmark Revenue Growth

The Food Safety Department doubled its revenue in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22. The revenue of ₹28.94 crore generated by the department in 2022-23 was 193 per cent more than that of the previous financial year. [Kerala](#) This reflected a sharp increase in compliance activity, licensing, and enforcement operations across the State.

2023 — Kerala Ranks First in the State Food Safety Index (SFSI)

Among the larger states, Kerala secured the top ranking in the State Food Safety Index 2022-23, followed by Punjab and Tamil Nadu. [Saleem Akber](#) This national recognition was a testament to Kerala's exceptional performance across key food safety parameters including inspections, sample collection and testing, prosecution, laboratory infrastructure, training, and consumer empowerment initiatives.

2024 — Kerala Retains Top Position in SFSI for Two Consecutive Years

Kerala retained its top position in the State Food Safety Index 2023-24, holding the first position for two consecutive years. [Saleem Akber](#) The State achieved over 100% of its inspection target for the financial year, with all State Food Testing Laboratories being FSSAI-notified, NABL-accredited, and equipped with microbiology facilities and high-end analytical equipment.

National Firsts Achieved by Kerala

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, has distinguished itself as a pioneer in food safety governance at the national level. Two landmark achievements stand out:

- Kerala became the first state in India to roll out mobile food testing laboratories in all districts, enabling faster, on-the-spot testing. [VManifest](#)
- Kerala is the first state in the country to have all food safety laboratories accredited by NABL, ensuring top-tier reliability and accuracy in food testing. [VManifest](#)

1.4 Vision and Mission

Vision: To work hand in hand with the community towards building Kerala into a model State renowned for its food safety and quality, thereby achieving the realisation of the motto — *"Safe Food for Healthy Life."*

Mission:

- To help in the development and maintenance of a "Food Safety Culture" among the citizens of the State.
- To make "Safe and Nutritious Food" a way of life in Kerala.
- To ensure safe, healthy food and water for the citizens of Kerala and to develop healthy food habits through sustained regulatory action, scientific surveillance, and community engagement.

CHAPTER 2

Key Functions and Activities

Performance Review · April 2025 – March 2026

2.1 Introduction

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, discharges a wide array of statutory, regulatory, and public health functions under the mandate of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. These functions extend across the full spectrum of the food supply chain — from the issuance of licences to food business operators and the collection of samples from the market, to scientific laboratory analysis, legal prosecution of violators, targeted enforcement drives, consumer awareness campaigns, IEC activities, and the promotion of safe and nutritious eating habits.

This Chapter provides a comprehensive account of all key functions and activities undertaken by the department during the financial year 2025-26, supplemented by the institutional landmarks and flagship programmes carried forward from 2024-25. The data presented herein reflects performance reviewed at the Additional Chief Secretary (Health) level and certified by the Commissionerate, ensuring the highest standards of accuracy, transparency, and public accountability for upload on the Kerala Health Portal.

2.2 LICENSING AND REGISTRATION OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Regulatory compliance at the foundation of the food safety ecosystem

2.2.1 Legal Framework

Section 31 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, stipulates that every person who manufactures, stores, transports, distributes, or sells food shall obtain a licence or registration from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India or from the designated authority of the State, as applicable. Compliance with this provision is the foundational requirement of the food safety regulatory framework, as it brings every food business operator within the scope of statutory oversight and accountability.

The licensing and registration system in Kerala is administered through the FoSCoS (Food Safety Compliance System) platform — an integrated, digital, end-to-end portal developed by FSSAI that enables online application, processing, issuance, renewal, and monitoring of food business licences

and registrations. The platform has significantly improved the transparency, speed, and accessibility of the licensing process across the State.

2.2.2 Institutional Performance

Kerala continues to demonstrate exemplary performance in the implementation of the licensing and registration mandate. The State's robust enforcement ecosystem, combined with proactive licence melas and FoSCoS awareness drives, has resulted in a consistently high level of compliance among food business operators across all sectors — from home-based food entrepreneurs and Kudumbasree groups to large-scale food manufacturing units and multinational food companies. The cumulative baseline recorded in FY 2024-25 of 20,394 new licences and 2,12,436 new registrations — generating revenue of ₹24.42 crore — is being consolidated and expanded through the Operation FoSCoS campaigns and district-level licensing melas continuing in FY 2025-26.

Figure 2.1: Licensing and Registration Performance — FY 2024-25 Baseline

20,394 New Licences (Baseline) <i>FY 2024-25 reference</i>	2,12,436 New Registrations <i>FY 2024-25 reference</i>	₹24.42 Cr Revenue Generated <i>From licensing activities</i>	~20% Year-on-Year Growth <i>In compliance registrations</i>
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The State's proactive measures include widespread awareness through licensing melas organised in every district, targeting small and home-based food businesses, Anganwadi centres, Kudumbasree self-help group enterprises, fish vendors, chicken stalls, catering units, and road-side eateries. These melas function as one-stop facilitation centres where eligible food businesses can complete all licensing formalities on-the-spot, supported by dedicated Food Safety Officers. Mobile melas have also been conducted in select districts to reach businesses in remote areas. The effective use of the FoSCoS platform, combined with special enforcement drives against unlicensed operators, has advanced Kerala's position as a frontrunner in food safety compliance in India.

★ *From the consumer's perspective, the comprehensive licensing coverage reinforces trust in the food sold across Kerala, ensuring that every food business — from a neighbourhood tea stall to a five-star hotel — is subject to regulatory oversight. A licensed food business is an accountable food business.*

2.3 FOOD SAMPLING

Scientific evidence-based enforcement — the cornerstone of food safety

Sampling is the crux of all enforcement activities and the pivotal mechanism around which all legal proceedings under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 revolve. It provides the scientific evidence base for prosecution, adjudication, product recall, and market bans. The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, undertakes three distinct modes of sampling — Enforcement (Statutory), Surveillance, and Microbiological — each governed by specific provisions of the FSSA and its associated rules and regulations.

2.3.1 Enforcement (Statutory) Sampling — FY 2025-26

Section 38(1)(a) of the FSSA empowers Food Safety Officers to draw any article of food or substance meant for human consumption. Section 47, read with Rule 2.4.1 of the Food Safety and Standards Rules, 2011, prescribes the detailed procedures for sampling and analysis. The FSS (Laboratory and Sample Analysis) Regulations, 2011 specify the quantity of each food sample required for analysis (Regulation 2.3.1) and the use of preservatives in milk, milk products, and prepared food samples (Regulation 2.3.4). The laboratory analysis report in Form VIIA from the notified laboratory, or the report of the referral laboratory — which is deemed to be final — forms the basis for initiation of legal proceedings.

During FY 2025-26 (April 2025 – March 2026), a total of 17,587 enforcement (statutory) samples were lifted by Food Safety Officers across all 14 districts of the State against a target of 16,800 — representing an achievement of 104.7% of the target and a robust 53.4% increase over the 11,466 statutory samples lifted in the previous year. Of these, 17,587 samples were received at the State Food Testing Laboratories, 17,560 were analysed, and 3,176 samples (18.1%) were found to be non-conforming — each triggering statutory adjudication and/or prosecution action.

Figure 2.2: Enforcement (Statutory) Sampling Performance — FY 2025-26

17,587 Statutory Samples Lifted <i>104.7% of target (16,800)</i>	17,560 Samples Analysed <i>99.8% analysis rate</i>	3,176 Non-Conforming Samples <i>18.1% non-conformity rate</i>	+53.4% Growth vs FY 2024-25 <i>11,466 → 17,587 samples</i>
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Table 2.1 District-wise Statutory Sampling Performance — FY 2025-26:

District	Samples Lifted	Target	Achievement
Thiruvananthapuram	1,978	1,680	117.7%
Kollam	1,693	1,320	128.3%
Pathanamthitta	765	600	127.5%
Alappuzha	1,246	1,080	115.4%
Kottayam	1,126	1,080	104.3%
Idukki	604	600	100.7%
Ernakulam	1,682	1,680	100.1%
Thrissur	1,577	1,560	101.1%
Palakkad	1,272	1,440	88.3%
Malappuram	1,531	1,920	79.7%
Kozhikode	1,876	1,560	120.3%
Wayanad	469	360	130.3%
Kannur	1,398	1,320	105.9%
Kasaragod	370	600	61.7%
TOTAL	17,587	16,800	104.7%

2.3.2 Surveillance Sampling — FY 2025-26

Rule 2.1.3.4(iii)(d) and (l) of the Food Safety and Standards Rules, 2011 empowers Food Safety Officers to collect samples for surveillance, survey, and research purposes to identify and address food safety hazards. Unlike enforcement samples, surveillance samples may not be used for prosecution proceedings. They are collected and analysed to monitor food-borne illness trends, track food contamination patterns, and generate intelligence that guides evidence-based enforcement strategy.

Surveillance sampling operationalises the preventive philosophy of the FSSA — 'prevention is better than cure' — enabling the department to identify risks proactively before they cause widespread public health harm.

During FY 2025-26, a total of 27,996 surveillance samples were lifted across all 14 districts against a target of 25,200 — representing 111.1% target achievement. 28,677 samples were received at the State Food Testing Laboratories (including carryover from the preceding quarter) and 28,565 were analysed, yielding an analysis rate of 99.6%. Districts with the strongest surveillance performance include Ernakulam (3,363 samples), Malappuram (3,057 samples), Thiruvananthapuram (2,929 samples), and Kozhikode (2,848 samples).

Figure 2.3: Surveillance Sampling Performance — FY 2025-26

27,996 Surveillance Samples Lifted <i>111.1% of target (25,200)</i>	28,677 Samples Received at Lab <i>FY 2025-26</i>	28,565 Samples Analysed <i>99.6% analysis rate</i>	14/14 Districts Participating <i>Statewide coverage</i>
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Table 2.2 District-wise Surveillance Sampling Performance — FY 2025-26:

District	Samples Lifted	Target	Achievement
Thiruvananthapuram	2,929	2,520	116.2%
Kollam	2,211	1,980	111.7%
Pathanamthitta	953	900	105.9%
Alappuzha	1,728	1,620	106.7%
Kottayam	1,706	1,620	105.3%
Idukki	934	900	103.8%
Ernakulam	3,363	2,520	133.5%
Thrissur	2,393	2,340	102.3%
Palakkad	2,265	2,160	104.9%
Malappuram	3,057	2,880	106.1%

District	Samples Lifted	Target	Achievement
Kozhikode	2,848	2,340	121.7%
Wayanad	593	540	109.8%
Kannur	2,117	1,980	106.9%
Kasaragod	899	900	99.9%
TOTAL	27,996	25,200	111.1%

2.3.3 Microbiological Sampling and Laboratory Infrastructure

Microbiological sampling and testing play a critical and growing role in food safety enforcement by detecting pathogenic microorganisms such as Salmonella spp., Escherichia coli, Listeria monocytogenes, Staphylococcus aureus, and other regulated pathogens that are the causative agents of food-borne illness. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India issued the General Guidelines on Sampling for Microbiological Analysis in 2021. Appendix B of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011 outlines specific sampling plans and microbiological criteria for high-risk food categories.

The Department of Food Safety, Kerala, pioneered microbiological sampling at the State level from 2023 — a groundbreaking initiative that positioned Kerala as a national leader in preventive food safety. High-risk food samples including dairy products, meat, meat products, ready-to-eat foods, and fish are routinely collected and submitted to NABL-accredited laboratories within the timelines prescribed under the Guidelines.

Laboratory Infrastructure — Strategic Expansion:

- **Microbiology Labs at Ernakulam & Kozhikode** — Inaugurated on 26 February 2024 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. Both laboratories have secured NABL Accreditation and are operational for advanced pathogen testing.
- **Microbiology Lab at Thiruvananthapuram** — Inaugurated on 15 January 2025 by Smt. Veena George, the Hon'ble Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development. NABL-accredited and fully operational.
- **District Food Testing Laboratory, Pathanamthitta** — Inaugurated on 15 January 2025 by Smt. Veena George, Hon'ble Minister for Health. Became fully operational on 4 November 2025, strengthening Central Travancore's testing capacity.
- **National Recognition for Government Analyst's Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram** — In 2025, the Government Analyst's Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram, was recognised as an examination centre

for the FSSAI Food Analyst Examination — a national-level recognition of the State's technical excellence and a landmark achievement for Kerala.

All three State Microbiology Laboratories are now NABL-accredited and are systematically expanding their scope of analysis in a phased manner, enabling comprehensive in-house microbiological testing for all regulated pathogens. This infrastructure expansion has transformed Kerala from a State that outsourced microbiological testing into a State with world-class in-house analytical capacity — a transformation that directly strengthens consumer protection and enforcement timeliness.

2.3.4 Food Safety on Wheels (FSW) — FY 2025-26

The "Food Safety on Wheels" initiative is designed to be a comprehensive and sustainable approach to food safety by bringing testing, awareness, and training directly to consumers and food businesses in their communities. These multipurpose vehicles serve three converging functions — testing and surveillance; awareness generation; and training and capacity building — reaching remote areas, festivals, pilgrimage routes, educational institutions, and marketplaces across Kerala.

During FY 2025-26, Kerala's Food Safety on Wheels fleet delivered outstanding performance — establishing the State as a national model for mobile food safety infrastructure.

Figure 2.4: Food Safety on Wheels (FSW) Performance — FY 2025-26

46,898 On-the-Spot Tests <i>Mobile testing via FSW</i>	2,193 Training Sessions <i>Food handlers & FBOs</i>	2,645 Awareness Sessions <i>Consumer outreach</i>	14 Districts Covered <i>Statewide FSW deployment</i>
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2.4 INSPECTION OF FOOD BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

Preventive, risk-based, and real-time regulatory oversight

Consumers have a fundamental right to safe food, and governments are duty-bound to uphold this through effective regulation and inspections. Food inspection by the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, has undergone a paradigm shift — from reactive, end-product checks to a preventive, risk-based approach that considers the entire food supply chain. Section 38(2) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 empowers Food Safety Officers to enter, inspect, and examine any premises where food is manufactured, stored, transported, or sold.

Inspections are conducted using the FoSCoRIS (Food Safety Compliance and Regulation Information System) — a real-time digital platform that records inspection findings, generates inspection reports,

tracks follow-up actions, and ensures transparency and accountability in enforcement. Inspection checklists are aligned with the Hygienic and Sanitary Practices prescribed under Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011.

FY 2025-26 has been a watershed year for inspection performance in Kerala. A total of 64,375 inspections were conducted across all 14 districts — against an annual target of 16,800 — representing an extraordinary achievement of 383.2% of the target. Every district exceeded its assigned target, with Ernakulam leading at 7,797 inspections, followed by Kozhikode (6,805), Malappuram (6,644), and Kollam (6,615). This unprecedented inspection density reflects both the commitment of field-level Food Safety Officers and the institutional maturity of the Commissionerate's digital enforcement architecture.

Figure 2.5: Inspection Performance — FY 2025-26

64,375 Total Inspections <i>April 2025 – March 2026</i>	383.2% Target Achievement <i>Against 16,800 target</i>	14/14 Districts Above Target <i>Universal compliance</i>	FoSCoRIS Digital Platform <i>Real-time tracking</i>
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Table 2.3 District-wise Inspection Performance — FY 2025-26:

District	Inspections Conducted	Target	Achievement
Thiruvananthapuram	5,632	1,680	335.2%
Kollam	6,615	1,320	501.1%
Pathanamthitta	2,259	600	376.5%
Alappuzha	3,941	1,080	364.9%
Kottayam	3,675	1,080	340.3%
Idukki	2,466	600	411.0%
Ernakulam	7,797	1,680	464.1%
Thrissur	4,878	1,560	312.7%
Palakkad	5,345	1,440	371.2%
Malappuram	6,644	1,920	346.0%

District	Inspections Conducted	Target	Achievement
Kozhikode	6,805	1,560	436.2%
Wayanad	1,492	360	414.4%
Kannur	5,102	1,320	386.5%
Kasaragod	1,724	600	287.3%
TOTAL	64,375	16,800	383.2%

2.4.1 Types of Inspections

- **Pre-Licence Inspections** — Conducted prior to the grant of a new food business licence to verify that the establishment meets the physical infrastructure, hygiene, and safety requirements prescribed under the FSSA.
- **Routine / Periodic Inspections** — Scheduled inspections of all categories of licensed and registered food business establishments to assess ongoing compliance with food safety standards, hygiene practices, and labelling requirements.
- **Complaint-Based Inspections** — Inspections initiated in response to complaints received from consumers through the Toll-Free Helpline (1800 425 1125), the online grievance portal, email, or the Chief Minister's Public Grievance Redressal Cell.
- **Risk-Based Inspections (RBIS)** — Inspections prioritised on the basis of the risk profile of the food business, focusing resources on high-risk categories that pose the greatest potential threat to public health.
- **Follow-up Inspections** — Post-notice inspections to verify that the corrective actions directed under rectification, improvement, or compounding notices have been implemented.
- **Special Squad Inspections** — Targeted inspections during festivals, pilgrimages, tourist seasons, and following food safety emergencies, conducted by dedicated enforcement squads.

2.4.2 Risk-Based Inspection System (RBIS)

The Risk-Based Inspection System (RBIS) schedules inspections based on the risk profile of food businesses, ensuring that limited enforcement resources are directed towards areas of highest public health risk. Under RBIS, nine high-risk food categories — dairy, meat, fish, eggs, prepared foods, Indian sweets, fortified rice kernels, packaged drinking water, and food for special nutritional use — are mandated to receive at least one inspection per year. This approach enables the department to achieve maximum public health impact from its inspection activities.

Kerala continues to maintain one of the highest levels of RBIS compliance in India, building upon the FY 2024-25 benchmark of 1,983 RBIS inspections at high-risk manufacturing units (97% target achievement). The FY 2025-26 inspection surge at the overall level has also strengthened coverage of high-risk manufacturing categories.

2.5 PROSECUTION, ADJUDICATION AND ENFORCEMENT NOTICES

Constitutional duty — protecting the right to life through food safety enforcement

Access to safe and nutritious food is an essential component of the Right to Life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. In alignment with this constitutional mandate, the Food Safety Department undertakes regular sampling of food items from the market and initiates appropriate legal and regulatory action based on laboratory results — safeguarding citizens from substandard, misbranded, adulterated, and unsafe food products.

Based on laboratory analysis reports, the following enforcement actions are available to the department under the FSSA: directions for product recall from the market; initiation of adjudication proceedings; filing of criminal prosecution in a court of law; and prohibition of the food article from manufacture, storage, distribution, or sale. These measures collectively ensure that only food that is safe, wholesome, and compliant with statutory standards reaches the consumer.

Figure 2.6: Enforcement Actions — Adjudication, Prosecution and Compounding

17,587 Cases Under Adjudication <i>FY 2025-26</i>	815 Prosecution Cases Filed <i>FY 2025-26</i>	409 Prosecution Cases Decided <i>50.2% disposal rate</i>	5,472 Compounding Notices <i>₹1,90,18,000 fine imposed</i>
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2.5.1 Adjudication — FY 2025-26

During FY 2025-26, a total of 17,587 cases were taken up for adjudication proceedings across the State, in respect of statutory samples and related enforcement matters. Violations pertained to a wide range of offences including sale of misbranded food products, supply of substandard food items, operation of food businesses without valid FSSAI licences, and maintenance of unhygienic conditions in food business premises.

A significant enforcement highlights continuing from 2024-25 has been the sustained adjudication action against restaurants and cafes involved in the preparation and sale of shawarma, specifically in response to directives of the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala mandating declaration of the 'use by' time on all food parcels. Non-compliance with this direction has consistently resulted in the prohibition of

such food products to protect consumer safety. The Adjudicating Officers at the district level have been augmented with dedicated administrative and legal support to clear the case load expeditiously while upholding the principles of natural justice.

2.5.2 Prosecution — FY 2025-26

During FY 2025-26, a total of 815 prosecution cases were filed across Kerala, targeting the most serious violations of food safety standards that pose direct threats to public health. The major grounds for prosecution included the use of non-permitted synthetic food colours in food products, presence of pesticide residues exceeding Maximum Residue Limits, detection of extraneous foreign matter in food samples, and adulteration of coconut oil, milk, and spices. 409 prosecution cases were decided during the year — representing a disposal rate of 50.2% — with Kozhikode (142 cases decided), Alappuzha (51), Palakkad (42), and Kannur (27) leading in case disposal through close coordination with the Hon'ble Courts.

Table 2.4 District-wise Prosecution Performance — FY 2025-26:

District	Cases Filed	Cases Decided
Thiruvananthapuram	56	11
Kollam	75	21
Pathanamthitta	22	3
Alappuzha	45	51
Kottayam	45	23
Idukki	20	21
Ernakulam	62	22
Thrissur	80	12
Palakkad	44	42
Malappuram	158	19
Kozhikode	137	142

District	Cases Filed	Cases Decided
Wayanad	12	9
Kannur	47	27
Kasaragod	12	6
TOTAL	815	409

2.5.3 Compounding of Offences and Fines Imposed

Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 empowers the Designated Officer to compound offences that are not punishable with imprisonment only, upon payment of a prescribed sum. Compounding enables expeditious closure of cases, generates revenue for the exchequer, and secures compliance without protracted litigation.

During FY 2025-26, a total of 5,472 compounding notices were issued across the State, with a cumulative fine amount of ₹1,90,18,000 imposed and recovered — a landmark enforcement outcome that reflects both the scale of the Commissionerate's regulatory oversight and the deterrent strength of its legal action. Ernakulam district led with 800 compounding notices and ₹28,10,000 in fines, followed by Malappuram (743 notices, ₹24,02,500) and Thrissur (601 notices, ₹16,30,000).

Table 2.5 District-wise Compounding Notices and Fines — FY 2025-26:

District	Notices Issued	Fine Imposed
Thiruvananthapuram	351	₹22,10,500
Kollam	332	₹9,79,500
Pathanamthitta	166	₹9,44,500
Alappuzha	387	₹10,24,000
Kottayam	485	₹18,39,500
Idukki	196	₹6,64,000
Ernakulam	800	₹28,10,000

District	Notices Issued	Fine Imposed
Thrissur	601	₹16,30,000
Palakkad	190	₹8,14,500
Malappuram	743	₹24,02,500
Kozhikode	321	₹12,55,500
Wayanad	166	₹5,91,500
Kannur	564	₹13,39,500
Kasaragod	170	₹5,12,500
TOTAL	5,472	₹1,90,18,000

2.5.4 Rectification and Improvement Notices

In addition to prosecution, adjudication, and compounding, Food Safety Officers issue Rectification Notices and Improvement Notices under the FSSA to direct food business operators to correct deficiencies identified during inspections within a stipulated time-frame. These preventive enforcement tools enable the department to uplift compliance standards without resorting immediately to penal action — a graduated enforcement philosophy that balances regulatory rigour with facilitative governance.

During FY 2025-26, the Commissionerate issued a total of 7,261 Rectification Notices and 991 Improvement Notices across all 14 districts. Ernakulam issued the highest number of Rectification Notices (1,553), reflecting the district's concentrated food business density, followed by Alappuzha (818) and Malappuram (750). For Improvement Notices, Kollam led with 161, followed by Ernakulam (138) and Idukki (88).

Table 2.6 District-wise Rectification and Improvement Notices — FY 2025-26:

District	Rectification Notices	Improvement Notices
Thiruvananthapuram	681	76
Kollam	567	161

District	Rectification Notices	Improvement Notices
Pathanamthitta	219	55
Alappuzha	818	75
Kottayam	486	46
Idukki	440	88
Ernakulam	1,553	138
Thrissur	196	74
Palakkad	185	34
Malappuram	750	84
Kozhikode	595	84
Wayanad	66	7
Kannur	543	52
Kasaragod	162	14
TOTAL	7,261	991

★ Kerala's FY 2025-26 enforcement performance — 64,375 inspections, 45,583 samples lifted, 815 prosecution cases, 5,472 compounding notices, 7,261 rectification notices, 991 improvement notices, and ₹1.90 crore recovered as fines — together represents one of the most comprehensive and rigorous food safety enforcement performances of any State in India.

2.6 PUBLIC GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL SYSTEM

Round-the-clock citizen interface for food safety complaints

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, has established a comprehensive, multi-channel Public Grievance Redressal System to ensure that every citizen of the State has direct, accessible, and effective means of reporting food safety violations, seeking regulatory intervention, and obtaining timely redress. This system operates across five integrated channels: a 24x7 Toll-Free Helpline, an online Grievance Portal, the Eat Right Kerala Mobile Application, a Closed User Group (CUG) mobile network connecting all 140+ Food Safety Officers and supervisory officers across the State, and dedicated official email IDs for every Circle Office, District Office, and Regional Office. Together, these channels ensure that no complaint goes unheard and no food safety risk goes unaddressed.

2.6.1 Toll-Free Helpline — 1800 425 1125

The Food Safety Toll-Free Helpline Number 1800 425 1125 is the department's primary public-facing grievance channel, operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and accessible free of charge from any mobile or landline phone across Kerala. The helpline is integrated with the Government Contact Centre — Kerala, operated by the IT Mission of the Government of Kerala, which functions as the centralised 'front-end' platform for receiving and routing food safety complaints from the public.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Government Contact Centre immediately forwards it to the relevant field-level Food Safety Officer through a call-forwarding mechanism. The complainant receives an acknowledgement via SMS or email confirming complaint registration, and is kept informed of the status of action taken — ensuring a closed-loop, transparent grievance management process. In cases of mass food poisoning or food safety emergencies, the helpline acts as a rapid alert system — the moment the Contact Centre receives information, it is immediately relayed to the concerned Food Safety Officer, the Deputy Commissioner of the region, and other relevant authorities for swift intervention.

TOLL-FREE	Number: 1800 425 1125 (free from any phone) Availability: 24 Hours × 7 Days a Week Operated by: Government Contact Centre – Kerala (IT Mission) Complaint routing: Forwarded to Circle FSO + District ACFS Complainant update: SMS / Email confirmation and status alerts
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2.6.2 Online Grievance Portal

The Food Safety Department, Government of Kerala, launched the dedicated Online Grievance Portal on 23 March 2023, inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister for Health, Women and Child Development, Smt. Veena George. The portal provides a fully digital, end-to-end complaint management system that enables citizens to register food safety complaints, upload photographic or video evidence, track the status of their complaint in real time, and receive updates on action taken by the department.

PORTAL

URL: <https://www.eatright.foodsafety.kerala.gov.in>

Launched: 23 March 2023 (by Hon. Minister Smt. Veena George)

Access: Web browser (desktop/mobile) + Android App integration

Available to: All citizens of Kerala — no charges applicable

Support Email: foodsafetykerala@gmail.com

Key Features of the Portal:

✓ **Real-Time Status Tracking** — Complainants can log in at any time to view the current status of their complaint, including whether it has been assigned to an FSO, whether inspection has been conducted, and what action has been taken.

✓ **Photographic and Video Evidence** — The portal accepts photographic and video uploads — a unique feature that enables complainants to provide documentary evidence of violations, making enforcement action faster and legally stronger.

✓ **Anonymous Complaint Option** — Citizens who are concerned about identity disclosure — such as employees of food establishments — can file anonymous complaints, which receive equal investigation priority.

✓ **District-wise Routing** — Complaints are automatically routed to the concerned Food Safety Officer of the relevant district and circle based on the location entered, ensuring geographic accuracy in complaint assignment.

✓ **Transparency and Accountability** — The system ensures that all complaints are formally registered, assigned, and tracked to closure — eliminating the possibility of complaints being ignored or lost.

2.6.3 Eat Right Kerala — Mobile Application

The Eat Right Kerala Mobile Application is the official food safety application developed by the Department of Food Safety, Government of Kerala. Available on the Google Play Store (Package: [in.gov.kerala.foodsafety.restaurants](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=in.gov.kerala.foodsafety.restaurants)), the app was developed by Inventlabs Innovations Private Limited, Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram, under the direction of the Commissionerate of Food

Safety, Kerala. The app currently has over 10,000 downloads and integrates both a consumer-facing restaurant directory and a grievance filing mechanism in a single digital platform.

APP	App Name: Eat Right Kerala · Developer: Department of Food Safety, Kerala Platform: Android (Google Play Store) Package ID: in.gov.kerala.foodsafety.restaurants · Downloads: 10,000+ Content Rating: Rated for 3+ (Government Application) Data Privacy: No data shared with third parties; encrypted in transit Support: foodsafetykeraladev@gmail.com
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2.6.4 CUG Numbers and Official Emails — Directory Architecture

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, has assigned Closed User Group (CUG) mobile numbers to all officers of the department — from the Commissioner to every Circle-level Food Safety Officer — ensuring round-the-clock direct telephonic access to the responsible official at every level of the regulatory hierarchy. All offices have dedicated official email IDs through which complaints, queries, and communications can be directed. The complete District and Circle-wise CUG Directory is published on the Department website and regularly updated on the Kerala Health Portal.

2.6.5 The Integrated Grievance Architecture

The five channels of the Public Grievance Redressal System are not isolated platforms but form an integrated, hierarchical response architecture. When a complaint is received through any channel, it flows through a defined escalation pathway that ensures accountability at every level:

✓ **Level 1 — Citizen Complaint** — Received via Toll-Free (1800 425 1125), Online Grievance Portal, Eat Right Kerala App, direct email to Circle Office, or complaint to Quick Response Team.

✓ **Level 2 — Circle FSO** — The responsible Food Safety Officer receives the complaint within minutes through call-forwarding or portal routing and conducts inspection within the stipulated time.

✓ **Level 3 — District ACFS** — The Designated Officer / Assistant Commissioner of Food Safety monitors FSO action, reviews inspection reports, and takes adjudication or prosecution decisions as warranted.

✓ **Level 4 — Regional DCFS** — Deputy Commissioner of Food Safety at the Regional Office oversees enforcement across all districts in the region, escalates cases requiring legal action, and coordinates with the Commissionerate.

✓ **Level 5 — Commissioner / Quick Response Team** — Mass food poisoning, media-sensitive cases, and cases forwarded from the CM's PGRC are handled directly by the Commissioner's office and the Quick Response Team constituted in all 14 districts since November 2017.

✓ **Closure and Feedback** — Complainant receives SMS/email updates at each stage and can track complaint status on the portal. Once action is complete, the complaint is formally closed with documented action taken.

The Public Grievance Redressal System of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, represents one of the most comprehensive and technologically advanced citizen-facing food safety interfaces in India. This multi-channel architecture reflects the Commissionerate's fundamental conviction: that food safety is not solely a regulatory responsibility but a shared public responsibility in which every citizen is both a stakeholder and a participant.

2.7 OPERATION LIFE — SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT DRIVES

Proactive, intelligence-driven enforcement across all food safety risk domains

Operation Life is the overarching umbrella framework under which all special, targeted enforcement drives of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, are coordinated. From 2024 onwards, all previously independent operations — Operation Shawarma, Operation Matsya, Operation Monsoon, Operation Nalikera, Operation Thattukada, Operation Tea Dust, Sabarimala drives, Onam / Christmas / New Year special squads, and others — have been integrated under this single, cohesive institutional framework.

Each drive under Operation Life is designed following careful identification of the specific food safety risks most prevalent in the relevant context — whether seasonal (monsoon, festivals), geographic (check posts, tourist areas), food-type-specific (shawarma, fish, coconut oil, tea dust), or institution-specific (hostels, canteens, thattukadas). The framework ensures that enforcement action, consumer awareness, and corrective follow-up are delivered simultaneously in every drive — making food safety both a regulatory responsibility and a community commitment. Operation Life continues to anchor

the Commissionerate's special drives in FY 2025-26, with each operation being reviewed and refreshed annually at the ACS (Health) Review Meetings.

2.7.1 Operation Shawarma

Arabic cuisine — particularly shawarma, shaway, alfahm, and mandhi — has become an integral part of Kerala's food culture. However, improper preparation practices — particularly the use of raw eggs in mayonnaise, which poses a significant Salmonella contamination risk in Kerala's hot and humid climate — led to several food poisoning incidents, including fatalities, that triggered a statewide enforcement response. Operation Shawarma was launched to systematically address these risks through a combination of enforcement, guidelines, and awareness.

Key interventions included: a landmark departmental ban on the use of raw-egg-based mayonnaise in all food establishments; issuance of comprehensive Shawarma Safety Guidelines covering proper food handling, temperature control, hygiene, and display of hygiene ratings; regular inspections of shawarma outlets across the State; and training of food handlers in safe Arabic food preparation practices.

Table 2.7: Operation Shawarma — Enforcement Summary

Operation Shawarma — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	512
Notices Issued	56
Compounding Notices Issued	108
Raw-Egg Mayonnaise Ban	Statewide — All establishments
Shawarma Guidelines Issued	Circulated to all FBOs

2.7.2 Operation Monsoon

As the monsoon season sets in, Kerala faces heightened risks of waterborne and food-borne diseases — cholera, typhoid, gastroenteritis, hepatitis A, and related illnesses — due to increased contamination of water sources and accelerated food spoilage. Operation Monsoon is the department's pre-emptive annual monsoon response drive, ensuring that food establishments use safe, tested water for cooking and food preparation, that hygiene standards are maintained during the high-risk period, and that consumers are aware of food safety precautions.

Table 2.8: Operation Monsoon — Enforcement Summary

Operation Monsoon — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	12,381
Notices Issued	1,638
Total Samples Lifted	6,936
Compounding Notices Issued	259

2.7.3 Operation Matsya

Kerala's 580 km coastline and extensive network of rivers, lagoons, and backwaters make fish the most consumed protein in the State. The increasing import of fish from other states has raised serious concerns about the quality, freshness, and safety of fish being transported and sold across Kerala. Chemical adulteration of fish — using formalin, potassium permanganate, and other preservatives to extend apparent shelf life — poses severe health risks to consumers. Operation Matsya was launched as a sustained enforcement drive to ensure the quality and safety of fish and seafood across the State's supply chain.

Table 2.9: Operation Matsya — Enforcement Summary

Operation Matsya — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	5,207
Notices Issued	312
Total Samples Lifted	6,996
Compounding Notices Issued	185
Total Compounding Amount	₹2,73,300

2.7.4 Special Drive for Hepatitis and Waterborne Disease Prevention

In response to the elevated risk of hepatitis A and other waterborne diseases — particularly during monsoon and festival seasons — the Food Safety Department conducted a dedicated enforcement drive targeting contaminated water used in food preparation. Food Safety Officers across the State conducted inspections of food business establishments to verify that only safe, tested water was being used for cooking, washing, and food preparation.

Table 2.10: Hepatitis / Waterborne Disease Drive — Summary

Hepatitis / Waterborne Disease Drive — Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	4,451
Notices Issued	627
Total Samples Lifted	1,948
Compounding Notices Issued	607

2.7.5 Operation Nalikera

Coconut oil is the most widely used cooking medium in Kerala, and its adulteration — through substitution with cheaper palm oil, hydrogenated oils, or other adulterants — is a persistent food safety concern that directly affects the health of Kerala's citizens. Operation Nalikera targeted the enforcement of coconut oil quality standards across wholesale markets, retail outlets, oil mills, and packaging units through surprise inspections, statutory and surveillance sampling, and consumer awareness.

Table 2.11: Operation Nalikera — Enforcement Summary

Operation Nalikera — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	658
Notices Issued	38
Total Samples Lifted	360
Compounding Notices Issued	18

2.7.6 Operation Tea Dust (Malappuram District)

Operation Tea Dust is a dedicated enforcement initiative of the Malappuram District Food Safety Wing, launched in June 2024 to detect, prevent, and eliminate the supply of adulterated tea dust in the local market. Malappuram's cultural preference for deep-red, strongly flavoured tea has made it a prime target for suppliers using synthetic food colours and recycled (used) tea leaves to replicate this appearance at reduced cost. The Mobile Food Testing Laboratory of the Malappuram District played a pivotal role in on-the-spot detection.

Table 2.12: Operation Tea Dust — Key Enforcement Actions

Operation Tea Dust — Key Enforcement Actions	Count / Value
Total Squads Conducted	12
Total Tea Dust Confiscated	500 kg
Statutory Samples Collected	18
Samples Confirmed Adulterated (Synthetic Colour)	6
Prosecution Initiated	All 6 confirmed adulterated cases
Interstate Supply Routes Busted	Ooty / Coimbatore → Malappuram

Notable enforcement actions included a major raid on 3 July 2024 where 200 kg of adulterated tea dust was confiscated from a Mankada Circle manufacturing unit; interception of a 120 kg consignment from Tamil Nadu suppliers traced to auto-rickshaw distributors in Tirur Circle; and a December 2024 raid on an illegal godown in a Tirur residential house where 100 kg of adulterated product was seized. Prosecution has been initiated against all parties in the manufacturing, supply, and distribution chain.

2.7.7 Safe Food at School and College Hostels and Canteens

A dedicated Special Squad drive was conducted across all 14 districts from 21 to 23 October 2024 to inspect school and college canteens and hostels — ensuring the health and safety of the student community through strict enforcement of food safety and hygiene standards, and creating awareness among canteen and hostel operators about best practices. This drive is repeated each academic year and forms part of the rolling Operation Life calendar.

Table 2.13: Safe Food @ Schools / Hostels — Summary

Safe Food @ Schools / Hostels — Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	1,191
Notices Issued	251
Samples Lifted	112
Compounding Notices Issued	139

Safe Food @ Schools / Hostels — Summary	Count / Value

2.7.8 Operation Thattukada

In response to growing concerns over food safety and hygiene in Kerala's vibrant thattukada (roadside eatery) culture, the department conducted Operation Thattukada on 11 and 12 November 2024. Recognising that thattukadas are most active during late night hours, dedicated Night Squads were deployed to conduct inspections after dark — a first-of-its-kind enforcement innovation in the State.

Table 2.14: Operation Thattukada — Enforcement Summary

Operation Thattukada — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	1,414
Notices Issued	268
Samples Lifted	167
Compounding Notices Issued	191
Night Squad Operations	Conducted on both nights statewide

2.7.9 Special Drive for Parcel Food Labelling Compliance

The Commissioner of Food Safety, Kerala, issued stringent directions vide Order No. CFS/74/2023-B1 dated 22 January 2024, stipulating that all food parcels must bear a sticker or stamp indicating the date and time of preparation, with a mandatory maximum consumption period of 2 hours for prepared foods (and 1 hour specifically for shawarma). A special enforcement drive was conducted from 15 to 17 January 2025 to verify compliance with these directions across restaurants, bakeries, food courts, and shawarma outlets.

Table 2.15: Parcel Food Labelling Drive — Summary

Parcel Food Labelling Drive — Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	979

Parcel Food Labelling Drive — Summary	Count / Value
Rectification Notices Issued	141
Improvement Notices Issued	30
Compounding Notices Issued	128
Regulatory Basis	Order No. CFS/74/2023-B1 dated 22.01.2024

2.7.10 Special Summer Season Drive — Packaged Drinking Water, Juices, Ice Cream

During the summer season, Kerala witnesses a sharp rise in demand for packaged drinking water, juices, soft drinks, ice cream, ice candy, and sip-ups — creating conditions in which unauthorised and substandard food businesses proliferate. The department conducted a special enforcement drive across all 14 districts on 4 and 5 February 2025, focusing on manufacturing, storage, distribution, and retail units dealing in summer refreshments.

Table 2.16: Summer Season Drive — Enforcement Summary

Summer Season Drive — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections Conducted	1,987
Rectification Notices Issued	224
Samples Collected	801
Compounding Notices Issued	128

2.7.11 Operation FoSCoS — Licensing and Registration Drive

A series of FoSCoS special drives and licensing / registration melas were conducted to identify unlicensed food businesses and bring every food business operator under the regulatory ambit of the FSSA. The campaign was held on 17-18 March in Thiruvananthapuram and 14-15 March in all other districts. Sectors covered included fish vendors, anganwadis, Kudumbasree units, chicken stalls, hotels, restaurants, and catering units. Mobile melas were organised in select districts for enhanced outreach. Strict enforcement action including closures, compounding, and adjudication was initiated against repeat non-compliant establishments.

Table 2.17: Operation FoSCoS — Particulars

Operation FoSCoS — Particulars	Details
Number of Squads Deployed	222
Total Inspections Conducted	5,199
Rectification Notices Issued	246
Compounding Notices Issued	133
Improvement Notices Issued	7
Closures Ordered	282
Cases Recommended for Adjudication	4

2.8 FESTIVAL AND PILGRIMAGE ENFORCEMENT

Duty, devotion, and food safety — safeguarding millions during Kerala's sacred seasons

2.8.1 Onam Special Squad

Onam — the most vibrant cultural festival of Kerala — witnesses a dramatic surge in food business activity over 10 days, with special foods including jaggery, banana chips, coconut oil, pulses, cereals, and payasam mixes commanding enormous market volumes. The Food Safety Department deploys a 10-day Onam Special Squad Operation combining inspections of all food business establishments, checkpoint surveillance at entry points from neighbouring states, and night squads for thattukadas and street food vendors.

Table 2.18: Onam Special Squad — Enforcement Summary

Onam Special Squad — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Inspections Conducted	3,926
Rectification Notices	483

Onam Special Squad — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Compounding Notices	386
Statutory Samples Collected	135
Surveillance Samples Collected	772
Closures Ordered	111

2.8.2 Christmas Special Squad

Christmas in Kerala sees a dramatic increase in demand for bakery products, cakes, dry fruits, food colours, meat products, confectionery, and wines. The Christmas Special Squad inspects bakeries, confectionery units, meat and fish markets, and sweet and snack units — with special focus on artificial colour use, quality of cooking oils, reuse of transit oil, and personal hygiene of food handlers. Mobile Food Testing Laboratories are deployed for on-the-spot detection of synthetic colours and adulteration.

Table 2.19: Christmas Special Squad — Enforcement Summary

Christmas Special Squad — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Inspections Conducted	2,861
Rectification Notices	343
Compounding Notices	249
Statutory Samples Collected	306
Surveillance Samples Collected	743
Closures Ordered	49

2.8.3 New Year Special Food Safety Enforcement

With Kerala's major tourist destinations — Kovalam, Varkala, Fort Kochi, Cherai, Kozhikode Beach, Sneha Theeram (Thrissur) — witnessing massive influxes of visitors during New Year celebrations, the department deploys special enforcement squads in the last two days of December to ensure that food served at late-night gatherings and tourist hotspots is safe, hygienic, and compliant.

Table 2.20: New Year Special Squad — Summary

New Year Special Squad — Summary	Count / Value
Inspections Conducted	1,340
Rectification Notices	182
Compounding Notices	109
Statutory Samples Collected	39
Surveillance Samples Collected	284
Closures Ordered	21

2.8.4 Check post Surveillance

The Food Safety Department maintains regular surveillance at entry check posts across Kerala to act as the State's first line of defence against the entry of substandard, adulterated, or unsafe food items from neighbouring states. Special squads are deployed at all major check posts — particularly during festive seasons when large volumes of food items including milk, edible oil, fish, meat, fruits, and vegetables are transported into the State. On-the-spot testing using Mobile Food Testing Laboratories, and collection of statutory samples for laboratory analysis, are carried out. Consignments failing quality checks are seized and offenders are prosecuted under the FSSA.

Table 2.21: Check post Surveillance — Summary

Check post Surveillance — Summary	Count / Value
Inspections Conducted	402
Samples Lifted	485

2.8.5 Sabarimala — Mandala Makaravilakku Season

Sabarimala, one of India's most revered pilgrimage destinations, transforms into a vibrant township during the Mandala Makaravilakku pilgrimage season from November to January — with lakhs of devotees converging at Sannidhanam via Erumeli, Nilakkal, and Pampa. The Food Safety Department assumes a sacred duty during this season, deploying dedicated Food Safety squads at all key locations throughout the pilgrimage. The department begins preparatory activities well before the season's

commencement, including FoSTaC training for food business operators, licensing and registration melas, water quality surveillance, and awareness campaigns.

Food Safety on Wheels mobile laboratories are stationed at Nilakkal base camp and Erumeli town throughout the season. Special food safety testing laboratories are set up at Sannidhanam and Pampa to verify the quality of raw materials used for Aravana and Appam — the sacred prasadam — with analytical testing of the finished products conducted at the laboratory at Sannidhanam. This end-to-end quality assurance of the prasadam preparation process is a unique and deeply significant public health intervention.

Table 2.22: Sabarimala Mandala-Makaravilakku — Consolidated Enforcement Report

Sabarimala Mandala-Makaravilakku — Consolidated Enforcement Report	Count / Value
Inspections Conducted	3,413
Complaints Received and Attended	118
Notices Issued	364
Compounding Notices	80
Surveillance Samples Lifted	1,806
Penalty Amount Collected	₹13,41,000
Adjudication Recommended	2 cases
Improvement Notices	1

2.8.6 Attukal Pongala Festival

The Attukal Bhagavathy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram — known as the Sabarimala of Women — hosts the Pongala festival, which holds the Guinness World Record for the largest congregation of women at any single place. The festival was celebrated from 5 to 14 March 2025, with the main Pongala on 13 March 2025. The temple was BHOG-certified in 2023 by FSSAI. The Government declared 32 wards as the Festival Area.

The Food Safety Department commenced preparatory enforcement three months prior to the festival, with special food safety raids one month before commencement. The festival area was divided into 4 surveillance zones with two dedicated Food Safety Officers per zone. Additional officers from neighbouring districts were deployed for reinforcement. The district's MFTL tested 157 food articles

and conducted 8 awareness sessions. A total of 449 Annadhanam registrations were issued — a record, reflecting the department's deep engagement with the religious and community fabric of the event. A control room inaugurated by the Commissioner of Food Safety was set up inside the temple compound, with on-the-spot FSSAI registration facilities (Akshaya service) for Annadhanam organisers.

Table 2.23: Attukal Pongala — Enforcement Summary

Attukal Pongala — Enforcement Summary	Count / Value
Total Inspections	501
Rectification Notices	20
Compounding Notices	15
Improvement Notices	5
Total Samples Collected	123 (Surveillance: 97, Statutory: 26)
Annadhanam Registrations Issued	449
MFTL Food Articles Tested	157
Awareness Sessions via MFTL	8

2.8.7 Special Task Force

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Food Safety Department, constituted under Order No. CFS/60/2023-B1 dated 20 January 2023, functions as the department's rapid-response and investigative enforcement wing. Its mandate includes swift response to emerging food safety challenges, issuance of timely alerts, rapid intervention in food adulteration and food poisoning cases, and inspections in critical locations including tourist zones, catering units, and interstate checkposts. The STF also prepared a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Food Safety Officers to respond to food safety emergencies — aligned with FSSAI's Guidelines for Investigating and Managing Food-Borne Illness Outbreaks in India — a landmark institutional document for the State's emergency preparedness.

Table 2.24: STF Operations

STF Operation	Districts	Units Inspected	Samples / Actions
Munnar Tourist Area Inspections	Idukki	102 establishments	12 notices for unlicensed operation
Onam Checkpost Palakkad	Palakkad	53 vehicles	18 MFTL tests + 7 statutory samples
Catering Units — Central Zone	5 districts	151 catering units	32 statutory, 58 compounding, 8 closures
Catering Units — Northern Zone	5 districts	186 catering units	24 statutory, 45 compounding, 10 closures

2.9 FOOD SAFETY TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION (FoSTaC)

Building a cadre of trained Food Safety Supervisors across Kerala's food ecosystem

The Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme, developed by FSSAI, mandates that every food business establishment employ at least one trained and certified Food Safety Supervisor. FoSTaC delivers structured, category-specific training modules to food business operators — equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and legal awareness required to maintain food safety and hygiene standards in their establishments. Training covers food safety principles, personal hygiene, HACCP basics, cleaning and sanitation, pest control, and compliance with FSSAI regulations.

Figure 2.7: FoSTaC Programme and Training Coverage

1,078	40,485	3,145	1,16,745
FoSTaC Programmes	Food Handlers Trained	Programmes Since 2022	Total Participants
<i>FY 2024-25 benchmark</i>	<i>FY 2024-25 benchmark</i>	<i>Cumulative to date</i>	<i>Cumulative since 2022</i>

2.9.1 FoSTaC for Street Food Vendors

A dedicated FoSTaC Level 1 (Basic) course has been designed specifically for street food vendors, tea stall operators, and petty retailers — covering essential hygiene, safe food handling, storage, and contamination prevention based on Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011. The 4-hour course is provided free of charge. A FoSTaC E-Learning app with online modules is also available for vendors to complete training and

download participation certificates digitally. This dedicated training is delivered year after year, reaching thousands of vendors across the State.

2.9.2 Food Safety on Wheels — Training and Awareness in FY 2025-26

In FY 2025-26, the Food Safety on Wheels (FSW) fleet emerged as a transformative instrument for both regulatory outreach and consumer education. The mobile laboratories — equipped for on-the-spot testing and with audio-visual training infrastructure — enabled the department to take food safety training and awareness directly into communities, markets, schools, festival grounds, and pilgrimage routes.

Figure 2.8: Food Safety on Wheels — Training and Awareness Activities

46,898	2,193	2,645	14
FSW Tests Performed <i>On-the-spot mobile testing</i>	FSW Training Sessions <i>For FBOs and food handlers</i>	FSW Awareness Sessions <i>Community outreach</i>	Districts Covered <i>Statewide FSW deployment</i>

2.9.3 General Awareness and Capacity Building — Consolidated

Table 2.25: General Awareness and Capacity Building — Consolidated

Category	Activity	Count / Reach
General Awareness Sessions	Public and community awareness classes	1,852 sessions
FoSTaC Training Programmes	Certified food safety supervisor training	1,124 sessions
FSW-based Training (2025-26)	Training using Food Safety on Wheels mobile labs	2,193 sessions
FSW-based Awareness (2025-26)	Consumer awareness using MFTL units	2,645 sessions
FSW-based Testing (2025-26)	On-the-spot sample testing via FSW	46,898 tests
Awareness Brochures Printed	IEC materials distributed to public and FBOs	7,500 brochures
Kudumbasree Awareness	Grassroots food safety training for SHG members	All 14 districts

Category	Activity	Count / Reach
Anganwadi Worker Training	Food hygiene and nutrition awareness for ICDS workers	All 14 districts
Institutional Kitchens (SNF)	Old age homes, orphanages, juvenile homes etc.	96 institutions

2.10 EAT RIGHT INDIA — INITIATIVES IN KERALA

Eat Safe. Eat Healthy. Eat Sustainable.

The Eat Right India (ERI) movement, spearheaded by FSSAI, is a holistic, system-wide initiative designed to transform the food ecosystem through three fundamental principles: Eat Safe, Eat Healthy, and Eat Sustainable. Kerala has wholeheartedly embraced the ERI framework, with all 14 districts actively participating in Eat Right Challenge Phase 4 — and three districts securing top national positions. The State's initiatives span benchmarking and certification of food environments, consumer empowerment, nutrition promotion, and food fortification.

2.10.1 Eat Right Certifications and Benchmarking

Figure 2.9: Eat Right India Certifications and Benchmarking Achievements

17 Clean Street Food Hubs <i>Certified across Kerala</i>	23 Clean Fruit & Vegetable Markets <i>FSSAI-certified</i>	43 Places of Worship (BHOG) <i>Certified</i>	1,905 Hygiene Rated Eateries <i>Cumulative baseline</i>
88 Eat Right Campuses <i>Education & workplaces</i>	49 Eat Right Schools <i>Nutrition education</i>	4,087 Hygiene Certifications <i>Received in FY 2025-26</i>	4 Iconic Food Streets <i>Modernised & inaugurated</i>

2.10.2 Hygiene Rating — FY 2025-26 Achievement

Kerala's Hygiene Rating programme received a transformative boost in FY 2025-26. A total of 4,087 hygiene rating certifications were received by food establishments across the State — a remarkable expansion of the Hygiene Rating footprint that more than doubles the cumulative total on record. Thrissur led the State with 492 certifications, followed closely by Kozhikode (471), Palakkad (447), Thiruvananthapuram (423), and Kannur (389). This surge establishes Kerala as the undisputed leader in consumer-facing food safety transparency in India.

Table 2.26 District-wise Hygiene Rating Certifications Received — FY 2025-26:

District	Hygiene Rating Certifications Received
Thiruvananthapuram	423
Kollam	351
Pathanamthitta	61
Alappuzha	283
Kottayam	269
Idukki	115
Ernakulam	383
Thrissur	492
Palakkad	447
Malappuram	292
Kozhikode	471
Wayanad	81
Kannur	389

District	Hygiene Rating Certifications Received
Kasaragod	30
TOTAL	4,087

★ With 4,087 new Hygiene Rating Certifications issued in FY 2025-26 alone — on top of the existing 1,905 rated eateries — Kerala has institutionalised consumer-empowering food safety transparency at an unprecedented scale, reinforcing the State's position as the national leader in Hygiene Rating coverage.

2.10.3 Eat Right Kerala Programme

The Eat Right Kerala Programme — themed 'Safe Food for Better Life' — was conducted on 6 and 7 February 2026 at the Central Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram, as a landmark state-level initiative. Inaugurated by Hon'ble Health Minister Smt. Veena George, the programme marked the release of the FOOD BEE Mascot, the Department's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and the District Food Safety Index — symbolising the Commissionerate's commitment to accountability and excellence. The two-day programme comprised a Millet Mela Recipe Competition (Millet Marvels), food festival, departmental stall exhibitions, cultural programmes, expert panel discussions on safe food practices and low-sugar/low-salt/low-fat diets, a seminar on safe meat production in collaboration with the National Meat Research Institute (NMRI), Hyderabad, a folk cultural performance by IPTA, and an office yoga session in collaboration with the National Ayush Mission.

2.10.4 Modernisation of Food Streets

As part of FSSAI's national initiative to transform 100 street food hubs into models of hygiene and safety, Kerala has developed four iconic Food Street locations. These were inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister Smt. Veena George:

Table 2.27: Modernisation of Food Streets

Location	District	Inauguration Date
Shanghumugham Beach	Thiruvananthapuram	5 November 2025

Location	District	Inauguration Date
Kasthurba Nagar	Ernakulam	27 September 2025
Kottakkunnu	Malappuram	14 February 2026
Kozhikode Beach	Kozhikode	20 October 2025

2.10.5 Food Fortification

Kerala is an active participant in India's Food Fortification programme — the scientifically validated, cost-effective public health intervention to address micronutrient deficiency disorders ('hidden hunger') affecting millions. The FSSAI-mandated fortification of key staples — rice, wheat flour, edible oil, salt, and milk with essential vitamins and minerals — forms the backbone of this programme, aligned with the Prime Minister's 2021 announcement of scaled-up rice fortification under ICDS, PDS, and PM POSHAN schemes. The department organises food fortification demonstration programmes across the State, showcasing that fortification does not alter the taste, texture, colour, or flavour of food.

2.10.6 RUCO — Repurpose Used Cooking Oil

The RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) initiative by FSSAI is India's first national programme to collect used cooking oil (UCO) from food business operators — restaurants, hotels, caterers, and canteens — for conversion into biodiesel and other value-added products. RUCO prevents the reuse of harmful, degraded cooking oil in food preparation, which is a significant hidden public health risk, while simultaneously promoting green energy and environmental sustainability. Kerala's implementation of RUCO aligns with both the Swachh Bharat Mission and the clean fuel goals of the Government of India. IEC outreach on RUCO — through print media, brochures, and agro-hospitality publications — has been intensified during FY 2025-26 to expand the collection network.

2.10.7 Save Food Share Food

The 'Save Food Share Food' initiative promotes food conservation and the channelling of surplus, safe food to vulnerable communities — reducing food wastage while addressing food insecurity. The programme engages individuals, organisations, and food businesses through awareness campaigns, community partnerships, and practical guidance on responsible food management.

2.10.8 Eat Right Melas, Walkathons, and Nukkad Natak

Eat Right Melas and Walkathons were conducted in 5 major cities of Kerala, attracting over 5,000 participants including students, NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, club members, KHRA members, and food

business associations. The events highlighted healthy eating habits, the nutritional benefits of millets, and food safety awareness through competitions, quizzes, seminars, and stall demonstrations. Each event was inaugurated by District Collectors or District Ministers. In addition, 26 Nukkad Natak (street plays) were conducted across all 14 districts as part of Eat Right Challenge Phase 4 — interactive performances incorporating magic shows, folk songs, and audience participation to reach diverse audiences including local residents, students, and casual passersby.

2.11 STATE AND DISTRICT-LEVEL INITIATIVES

Innovative, community-rooted food safety programmes across Kerala

2.11.1 Bhakshya Suraksha Nagaram Padhathi

This flagship urban food safety scheme develops selected municipalities and cities as model food-safe towns through strengthened enforcement, systematic monitoring, and enhanced stakeholder participation. It focuses on licensing and registration compliance, sanitary and hygienic practices in food establishments, regular inspections and surveillance, capacity building of food handlers, and consumer awareness.

2.11.2 Bhakshya Suraksha Panchayath Programme

The community-based rural counterpart of the Nagaram Padhathi, this programme transforms selected Gram Panchayaths into model food-safe local bodies by engaging Local Self Government institutions actively in food safety enforcement and awareness at the grassroots level.

2.11.3 Safe and Nutritious Food (SNF) at Schools

Qualified dietitians conduct SNF awareness sessions in schools, educating students on healthy eating habits, balanced diet, food safety practices, and prevention of junk food consumption — in alignment with FSSAI's SNF at School initiative. Given the alarming rise of obesity, hypertension, and lifestyle diseases among youth linked to unhealthy dietary habits, this programme targets the next generation with evidence-based nutrition education.

2.11.4 Niramalla Ruchi — 'Say No to Synthetic Colour' Campaign, Kozhikode

Launched on 3 October 2024 in Kozhikode — Kerala's culinary capital — this flagship campaign aims to eliminate the use of synthetic food colours in bakery and restaurant products and to ultimately declare Kozhikode a 'No Artificial Colour Zone.' The campaign uses live demonstrations via Mobile Food Testing Laboratories, school student awareness sessions, residents' association engagement,

and street plays. To date, 23 awareness sessions have been conducted, and the campaign has achieved a remarkable 60% reduction in non-conforming food samples positive for artificial colours in the district.

2.11.5 Sugar Board Initiative, Kozhikode

To address the alarming statistic that 23.6% of Kerala's population is diabetic, and that many popular soft drinks contain 15–25% sugar — far exceeding the ICMR's recommended daily allowance of 25 grams — the Kozhikode Food Safety Department has installed 'Sugar Boards' in 60 schools. These boards visually depict the teaspoon-equivalent sugar content of common beverages. 150 installations are planned, with support from the Lions Club, Kerala Kaumudi, and an advisory board under the District Collector.

2.11.6 Healthy Plate Initiative, Malappuram and Aarogya Thalika, Kollam

The Healthy Plate initiative at Malappuram Civil Station Canteen provides nutritionally balanced meals (rice, sprouted pulses, boiled beans, leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, and eggs/chicken) as an alternative to high-carbohydrate diets common among office workers. The Aarogya Thalika in Kollam promotes a meal composition of 25% carbohydrates, 25% protein, 35% vegetables, and 15% fruits, supplemented by Oil Boards and Sugar Boards for awareness on excessive fat and sugar intake.

2.11.7 Nellikka Campaign, Malappuram

The 'Nellikka' (Indian Gooseberry) campaign in Malappuram promotes healthier lifestyle choices by reducing excessive sugar, salt, oil, and artificial colours in food — beginning with sugar-free tea in official meetings and expanding to hotels and restaurants offering healthier alternatives. The campaign complements the Healthy Plate initiative and is supported by regular enforcement inspections of bakeries and restaurants for overuse of cooking oils, preservatives, and synthetic colours.

2.11.8 Medical Fitness Certificate Compliance Drive

Under Regulation 2.1.2 of the FSS (Licensing and Registration) Regulations, 2011, every person working in a food establishment is required to be in possession of a valid Medical Fitness Certificate issued by a Registered Medical Practitioner. The Commissionerate has launched a sustained IEC and enforcement drive to ensure universal compliance with this provision — including Malayalam-language newspaper advertisements, circle-level awareness sessions for FBOs, and dedicated inspections verifying Health Card availability. This protects food handlers, food businesses, and consumers alike, and represents a foundational pillar of Kerala's food safety ecosystem.

2.11.9 SNF at Workplaces and Institutional Kitchens

The SNF @ Workplace programme recognises and rewards companies providing healthy eating options to employees. The Institutional Kitchen initiative covered 96 institutions — old age homes, orphanages, destitute homes, and children's homes — across all districts, with pre-audit inspections, corrective guidance, and FoSTaC training for food handlers in these vulnerable-population settings.

2.12 INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (IEC)

Reaching every citizen through every medium available

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, deploys a diverse and far-reaching Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy to raise food safety awareness across all segments of the population. The department uses traditional media, digital platforms, outdoor media, and community engagement simultaneously — ensuring that its messages on safe food practices, adulteration awareness, label reading, and healthy eating reach the widest possible audience.

Table 2.28: Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and Media Outreach Activities — FY 2025–26

Medium	Activity	Count / Reach
Print Media	Awareness campaigns in Malayalam and national newspapers (Mathrubhumi, Manorama, Desabhimani, The Hindu, Times of India, Indian Express)	133 campaigns
Radio	Broadcast of food safety awareness messages on All India Radio and private stations	104 broadcasts
Television	Awareness dissemination through Doordarshan and major news channels	49 campaigns
Social media	Facebook (66K followers), Instagram, Twitter, YouTube — posters, animations, videos; all 14 districts active	743 campaigns

Medium	Activity	Count / Reach
Bus Branding	Awareness messages on 150+ KSRTC buses — reduce salt/sugar/oil, read labels, packaging safety	150+ buses
LED Display Boards	Awareness videos at railway stations in TVM, Kollam, Kayamkulam, Kottayam, EKM, Thrissur, Guruvayur; and city display boards	7 major railway stations
Cinema Screens	Food safety awareness messages on big screens in cinema theatres	Statewide coverage
IEC at Sabarimala	Guidelines in Malayalam, English, Tamil and Hindi; TV & radio awareness; LED display boards; posters and jingles	Pilgrimage season
IEC at Pongala	Guidelines via newspapers, radio and channels; 3,000 visari distributed; LED and brochure distribution	Festival season
Translation	Yellow Book and Eat Right Toolkit translated into Malayalam; RUCO video and labelling poster translated	Ongoing
World Food Safety Day	State-level event at Mahatma Ayyankali Hall, TVM; district-level events in all 14 districts; flash mobs, walkathon, competitions	7 June 2024 + 2025 edition
Creative Design	Magazine ads for RUCO initiative; Malayalam newspaper ads on Medical Fitness Certificate; digital campaign assets	Continuous production

2.13 Conclusion

Chapter 2 documents the comprehensive and multi-dimensional scope of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala's key functions and activities during the financial year 2025-26 — encompassing licensing and registration, sampling, inspection, prosecution, targeted enforcement operations, consumer grievance redressal, festive and pilgrimage food safety, training and certification, Eat Right initiatives, local innovation programmes, and a statewide IEC ecosystem.

The breadth and depth of these activities in FY 2025-26 — 64,375 inspections (383.2% of target); 45,583 food samples lifted comprising 17,587 statutory (104.7% of target) and 27,996 surveillance samples (111.1% of target); 17,587 cases under adjudication; 815 prosecution cases filed with 409 decided; 5,472 compounding notices generating ₹1,90,18,000 in fines; 7,261 rectification notices; 991 improvement notices; 4,087 Hygiene Rating certifications; 46,898 on-the-spot Food Safety on Wheels tests; 2,193 FSW training sessions; 2,645 FSW awareness sessions; three NABL-accredited Microbiology Laboratories; the fully operational District Food Testing Laboratory at Pathanamthitta; and national recognition of the Government Analyst's Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram, as an FSSAI

Food Analyst Examination Centre — together reflect a department that is simultaneously rigorous in its regulatory role, innovative in its public health approach, and deeply sensitive to the cultural and social fabric of Kerala.

The overarching vision that animates all these activities remains constant: that every citizen of Kerala — whether a pilgrim at Sabarimala, a school child in Malappuram, a devotee at Attukal Pongala, or a family dining at a neighbourhood eatery — deserves safe, wholesome, and nutritious food. The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, is resolute in its commitment to making this a reality through evidence-based enforcement, citizen-facing transparency, and the continuous expansion of institutional capacity documented in this Chapter.

★ *The FY 2025-26 performance data presented in this Chapter represents the Commissionerate's accountability to the people of Kerala — reviewed at the Additional Chief Secretary (Health) level, certified by the Commissioner of Food Safety, and published on the Kerala Health Portal as a transparent and verifiable record of the Department's work for the year.*

CHAPTER 3

Department Infrastructure and Human Resources

3.1 Introduction

The institutional strength of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, is built upon two indispensable pillars: robust physical infrastructure distributed across the length of the State, and a dedicated, multi-disciplinary human resource base that drives the department's mandate at every level. Together, these pillars constitute the operational backbone that enables the Commissionerate to fulfil its statutory obligations under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 — ensuring that safe and wholesome food reaches every citizen of Kerala.

This Chapter provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the departmental infrastructure across its three functional wings — Administrative, Enforcement, and Analytical — as well as the human resources framework that animates the department from the Commissioner's office at Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram, to the 140 Food Safety Circle Offices spread across every Legislative Constituency in the State.

3.2 ADMINISTRATIVE WING

Governance Arm of the Commissionerate of Food Safety

3.2.1 Institutional Overview

The Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, functions as a Department under the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Kerala. The Commissioner of Food Safety — an officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) — is the Head of the Department and the apex authority vested with all statutory powers under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the rules and regulations framed thereunder.

The department is structured into three functional divisions: Administration, Enforcement, and Analytical. The Administrative Division is headquartered at the Commissionerate and handles all

governance, financial, personnel, and compliance-related functions. The administrative complex, known as Bhakshyasuraksha Bhavan, is located at Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram.

HQ ADDRESS	Office of the Commissioner of Food Safety Bhakshyasuraksha Bhavan, Thycaud P.O. Thiruvananthapuram — 695 014, Kerala Ph: 0471-2322833 / 2322844 Fax: 0471-2322855 Email: foodsafetykerala@gmail.com Toll-Free Helpline: 1800 425 1125
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3.2.2 Key Officials — Commissionerate Headquarters

Table 3.1: Administrative Wing — Core Functional Responsibilities

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Contact
1	Smt. Afsana Perween IAS	Commissioner of Food Safety	0471-2322833
2	Sri. Aji S	Joint Commissioner (Enforcement) (In-charge)	0471-2322833
3	Smt. Manjudevi P	Deputy Director (PFA) / CMO Portal Officer	0471-2322833
4	Smt. Rani Ahammed	Finance Officer	0471-2322833
5	Sri. Ramesh T N	Senior Superintendent (Accounts & Audit)	0471-2322833
6	—	Administrative Officer	0471-2322833

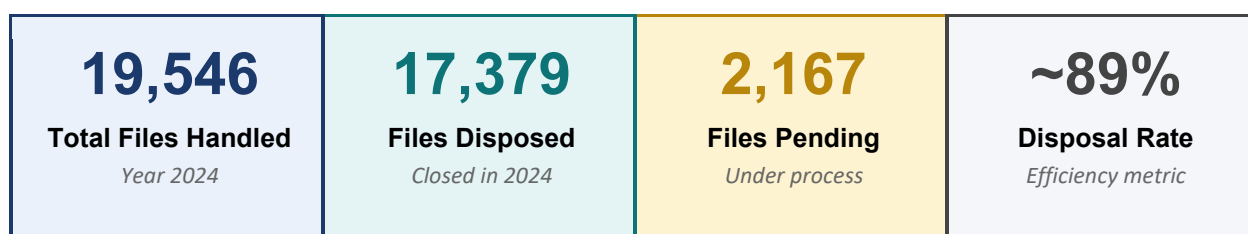
3.2.3 Administrative Functions

The Administrative Wing processes and monitors all files pertaining to the governance of the Commissionerate across its enforcement and analytical divisions. The major subject areas administered include:

- **Personnel Administration:** Recruitment, transfer and postings, seniority lists, pension records, salary processing, leave management, and temporary advances for all cadres of the department.
- **Procurement and Logistics:** Purchases for enforcement activities and analytical laboratories, mobility support for field enforcement teams, and maintenance of the departmental fleet.
- **Financial Management:** Annual budget preparation, fund utilisation monitoring, MOU-related financial files, and coordination with the Finance Department of the Government.
- **Vigilance and Audit:** Disciplinary proceedings, vigilance action files, internal audit, Accountant General (AG) audit files, and compliance with audit observations.
- **Public Interface:** Handling of complaints from the public and their follow-up, RTI applications and responses, Legislative Assembly Questions, Court-related matters, and consumer grievance management.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Implementation of directives and advisories issued by FSSAI and the State Government, filing of periodic reports, and coordination with national bodies.
- **Green Protocol Compliance:** All offices of the Commissionerate are maintained in accordance with the Green Protocol mandated by the Government of Kerala, with compliance monitored and reviewed periodically.

During the year 2024, the Administrative Wing handled a total of 19,546 files across all subject areas. Of these, all files except 2,167 were closed after the completion of all required actions — demonstrating a high degree of administrative efficiency and file disposal, with a pending rate of approximately 11%.

Figure 3.1: Administrative Wing — File Disposal Performance



3.3 ENFORCEMENT WING

Regulatory Backbone of the Commissionerate of Food Safety

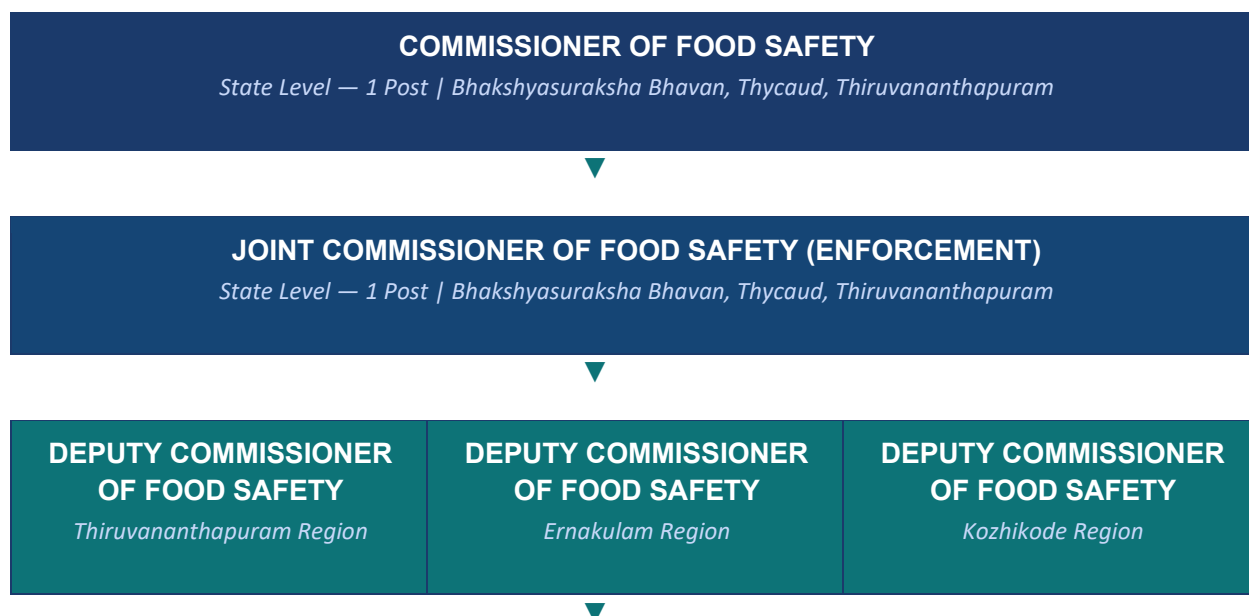
3.3.1 Overview

The Enforcement Wing is the primary regulatory arm of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, responsible for implementing the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and all associated rules, regulations, and orders across the entire State of Kerala. Its mandate encompasses licensing and registration of Food Business Operators (FBOs), periodic inspections of food establishments, surveillance sample collection, legal action under the FSSA, consumer awareness, and grievance redressal.

The Wing operates through a structured multi-tiered hierarchy extending from the State level to individual Legislative Constituency circles — ensuring uniform regulatory coverage across all 14 districts, 140 constituencies, and thousands of food business establishments in both urban and rural Kerala.

3.3.2 Organisational Hierarchy — Enforcement Wing

Figure 3.2: Organisational Hierarchy — Enforcement Wing



DESIGNATED OFFICERS (ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS OF FOOD SAFETY)

District Level — 14 Posts | One per District



FOOD SAFETY OFFICERS (FSOs) — CIRCLE OFFICES

Field Level — 140 Circle Offices | One per Legislative Constituency across all 14 Districts

3.3.3 Regional Offices — Deputy Commissioners of Food Safety

Three Regional Offices headed by Deputy Commissioners of Food Safety are the pivotal nodes of enforcement coordination, each supervising and supporting the district-level Designated Officers and FSOs within their respective regions.

Table 3.2: Regional Offices — Deputy Commissioners of Food Safety

Region	Office of Deputy Commissioner	Office Address	Mobile No.	Email
Thiruvananthapuram Region	Sri. AnilKumar N	Bhakshyasuraksha Bhavan, Thycaud P.O., Thiruvananthapuram — 695 014	8943346195	dcfstvpm@gmail.com
Ernakulam Region	Sri. Randeep	Civil Station, Kakkanad, Ernakulam	8943346196	dcfsimvsekm@gmail.com
Kozhikode Region	Sri.Vinod	IPD Building, Kottaparambu, Kozhikode	8943346197	cfikkd@gmail.com

3.3.4 District-Level Offices — Assistant Commissioners of Food Safety (Designated Officers)

Each of Kerala's 14 districts is served by a Designated Officer at the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Food Safety, responsible for all food safety enforcement activities, licensing adjudication, and legal proceedings within the district.

Table 3.3: District Offices — Assistant Commissioners / Designated Officers

Sl. No.	Name of Designated Officer	District	Mobile No.
1	Sri. Jayakumar C V	Thiruvananthapuram	8943346181
2	Sri. Vinodkumar T S	Kollam	8943346182
3	Sri. Randeep C R	Pathanamthitta	8943346183
4	Smt. Subimol Y J	Alappuzha	8943346184
5	Sri. Anas A	Kottayam	8943346185
6	Sri. Byju P Joseph	Idukki	8943346186
7	Sri. Jose Lawrance	Ernakulam	8943346187
8	Sri. Sujayan K	Thrissur	8943346188
9	(Post Vacant)	Palakkad	8943346189
10	Sri. Sujith Pereria D	Malappuram	8943346190
11	Sri. Sakkeer Hussain	Kozhikode	8943346191
12	Smt. Bibi Mathew	Wayanad	8943346192
13	Sri. Musthafa K P	Kannur	8943346193
14	Sri. Vinod Kumar K	Kasaragod	8943346194

3.3.5 Human Resources — Enforcement Wing

Food Safety Officers (FSOs), the frontline enforcement functionaries of the Commissionerate, are recruited through the Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC). The post carries the pay scale of ₹39,300–₹83,000 and requires qualifications in Food Technology, Dairy Technology, Biotechnology,

Agricultural Science, Veterinary Sciences, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Chemistry (PG), or Medicine. Each FSO is responsible for all enforcement activities within a designated Circle comprising multiple municipalities and panchayats.

Table 3.4: Circle Offices and Food Safety Officer Distribution

Post	Sanctioned Strength	Remarks
Commissioner of Food Safety	1	IAS Officer
Deputy Director-Prevention of Food Adulteration	1	Laboratory Wing Head
Joint Commissioner of Food Safety	1	Enforcement Wing Head
Deputy Commissioner of Food Safety	3	One per Region
Asst. Commissioner / Designated Officer	14	One per District
Food Safety Officer (FSO)	170	As per Legislative Assembly and nodal officers
Administrative Officer	1	Commissionerate HQ
Finance Officer	1	Commissionerate HQ
Sr. Superintendent (Accounts & Audit)	1	Commissionerate HQ
Sr. Superintendent (Establishment and General)	1	Commissionerate HQ

3.4 ANALYTICAL WING

Scientific and Technical Backbone of the Commissionerate of Food Safety

3.4.1 Overview

The Analytical Wing is the scientific pillar of the Commissionerate of Food Safety. It provides the laboratory-based analytical infrastructure that underpins all enforcement decisions, gives legal validity to prosecution proceedings, and generates the scientific data that drives food safety policy in Kerala. The Wing is headed by the Chief Government Analyst at Thiruvananthapuram, with Government Analysts heading the Regional Analytical Laboratories at Ernakulam and Kozhikode.

Figure 3.3: Organisational Structure — Analytical Wing

CHIEF GOVERNMENT ANALYST	Smt. Ramla K A, Chief Government Analyst Government Analyst’s Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram Mobile: 8943346180 Email: galtvpm@gmail.com
GOVT. ANALYST — ERNAKULAM	Smt. Ruby Mathew, Government Analyst (In-charge) Regional Analytical Laboratory, Ernakulam Mobile: 7593000298 Email: regionalanalyticalabernakulam@gmail.com

3.4.2 Laboratory Network

The State’s food testing laboratory network has evolved progressively over seven decades. Today it comprises three NABL-accredited Regional State Food Testing Laboratories, one specialised District Food Testing Laboratory at Pathanamthitta (for Sabarimala pilgrimage offerings), and 14 Mobile Food Testing Units (Food Safety on Wheels) deployed in every district. All three regional laboratories are simultaneously notified by FSSAI and accredited by NABL — making Kerala the first and only State in India to have its entire food safety laboratory network NABL-accredited.

Figure 3.4: Analytical Infrastructure and Laboratory Capacity

3 NABL-Accredited Labs	114 Technical Staff (State)	55,525 Samples Analysed 2024-25 <i>All three labs combined</i>	14 Mobile Labs (FSW) <i>All districts covered — National First</i>
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TVM • EKM • KKD — National First	Chemists, Food Technologists, Microbiologists		
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3.4.3 Transition to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

Since 2013, all three State Food Testing Laboratories have been operating at full capacity under the analytical framework mandated by the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The FSSA adopts a risk-based approach, systematically addressing potential food safety hazards and aligning with international food safety standards. It is significantly more comprehensive than the predecessor Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, incorporating advancements in Food Science, analytical technology, and global food trade requirements.

In pursuance of the FSSAI's mandatory requirement for ISO/IEC 17025 compliance through NABL accreditation for all food testing laboratories across India, all three State Food Testing Laboratories obtained NABL accreditation. Going further, the Ernakulam Regional Analytical Laboratory achieved the NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment in 2019 — the first State Food Testing Laboratory in India to achieve this distinction — setting a benchmark that the State continues to uphold.

3.4.4 Comprehensive Overview of State Food Testing Laboratories

Table 3.5: Comprehensive Overview of State Food Testing Laboratories

PARAMETER	Govt. Analyst Lab Thiruvananthapuram	Regional Analytical Lab Ernakulam	Regional Analytical Lab Kozhikode
Year of Establishment	1956	1975	1975
Regional Jurisdiction	5 Districts (Southern Region)	4 Districts (Central Region)	4 Districts (Northern Region)
NABL Accreditation Year	2017	2016 ★ First	2017

PARAMETER	Govt. Analyst Lab Thiruvananthapuram	Regional Analytical Lab Ernakulam	Regional Analytical Lab Kozhikode
NABL-FSSAI Integrated Accreditation	Yes	Yes ★ First in India (2019)	Yes
Current NABL Scope	2814 parameters	2183 parameters	1140 parameters
Integrated Scope	2665 parameters	2006 parameters	568 parameters
Microbiology Lab Inauguration	15 January 2025 by Hon. Health Minister	2 February 2024 by Hon. Prime Minister	2 February 2024 by Hon. Prime Minister
NABL Accreditation — Microbiology	12 November 2025	23 November 2025	15 November 2025
HEE — LC-MS/MS	2 Nos. (1 FSSAI + 1 State)	2 Nos. (1 MoU + 1 State)	1 No. (FSSAI Rate Contract)
HEE — GC-MS/MS	1 No. (State)	2 Nos. (State)	2 Nos. (1 FSSAI + 1 State)
HEE — ICP-MS	1 No. (FSSAI)	1 No. (MoU)	1 No. (FSSAI)
Other Equipment	HPLC (UVD/DAD/FLD/RID) GC-FID, ICP-OES UV-Vis Spectrophotometer	HPLC (UVD/DAD/FLD/RID) GC-FID, ICP-OES UV-Vis Spectrophotometer	HPLC (UVD/DAD/FLD/RID) GC-FID, ICP-OES UV-Vis Spectrophotometer
Technical Manpower (State-funded)	42	37	35
Contractual Staff — Tech. Assistants	3	3	3
Contractual Staff — Data Entry Operators	4	4	4
Contractual Staff — Lab Assistants	1	2	3
Total FSSAI-funded Contractual Staff	8	9	10
Samples Analysed — 2022-23	14,569	7,174	8,110

PARAMETER	Govt. Analyst Lab Thiruvananthapuram	Regional Analytical Lab Ernakulam	Regional Analytical Lab Kozhikode
Samples Analysed — 2023-24	20,385	15,367	16,509
Samples Analysed — 2024-25	21,754	16,995	167 ♦

♦ The Kozhikode figure of 167 for 2024-25 reflects a partial-year or data consolidation anomaly and does not represent a reduction in operational capacity. Actual throughput is aligned with prior-year trends.

3.4.5 Microbiology Laboratories — A Landmark Infrastructure Upgrade

Under the Central Sector Scheme of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India for strengthening food testing infrastructure, the Government of India allocated ₹4.5 crore for each of the three State Food Testing Laboratories in Kerala, specifically for ‘Setting up of Microbiology Section and Installation of Equipment on Turnkey Basis.’ This landmark investment has equipped all three laboratories with state-of-the-art microbiology facilities, enabling comprehensive testing for pathogenic microorganisms including Salmonella, Listeria, E. coli, Staphylococcus, and other regulated pathogens for the first time.

Table 3.6: Food Safety on Wheels — District-wise Deployment

Laboratory	Inauguration Date	Inaugurated By	NABL Accreditation (Microbiology)	Central Funding
GAL, Thiruvananthapuram	15 January 2025	Hon’ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Women & Child Development, Smt. Veena George	12 November 2025	₹4.5 Crore
RAL, Ernakulam	2 February 2024	Hon’ble Prime Minister of India	23 November 2025	₹4.5 Crore

Laboratory	Inauguration Date	Inaugurated By	NABL Accreditation (Microbiology)	Central Funding
RAL, Kozhikode	2 February 2024	Hon'ble Prime Minister of India	15 November 2025	₹4.5 Crore

3.4.6 Analytical Scope and Testing Parameters

All three State Food Testing Laboratories have progressively enhanced their NABL-accredited scope through each re-accreditation cycle, incorporating new parameters in line with evolving FSSAI requirements and emerging food safety risks. The current scope of testing covers the following major analytical domains:

- **Pesticide Residues:** Multi-residue analysis using LC-MS/MS (for organophosphates, carbamates, pyrethroids, neonicotinoids, etc.) and GC-MS/MS platforms — covering hundreds of pesticide molecules across fruits, vegetables, cereals, spices, and processed products.
- **Heavy Metals and Trace Elements:** Detection of lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury, chromium, tin, and other regulated metals using ICP-MS and ICP-OES — critical for seafood, spices, water, and packaged foods.
- **Mycotoxins:** Analysis of aflatoxins (B1, B2, G1, G2, M1), ochratoxin A, patulin, fumonisins, deoxynivalenol, and zearalenone — particularly in cereals, nuts, spices, and dried fruits.
- **Antibiotic and Veterinary Drug Residues:** Detection of tetracyclines, quinolones, sulfonamides, macrolides, beta-lactams, and other antibiotics in meat, fish, milk, eggs, and animal products.
- **Food Additives:** Testing for preservatives (benzoates, sorbates, sulphites), antioxidants, artificial colours, artificial sweeteners (saccharin, aspartame, acesulfame-K, cyclamate), and food fortification standards.
- **Nutritional Evaluation:** Analysis of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, moisture, ash, dietary fibre, vitamins, and minerals for nutritional labelling compliance.
- **Microbiological Parameters (Post-2024):** Total plate count (TPC), coliforms, E. coli, Staphylococcus aureus, Salmonella spp., Listeria monocytogenes, yeast, mould — across all categories of food and water.
- **General Characteristics:** Acidity, pH, density, adulteration-specific parameters (starch in milk, chicory in coffee, PUFA in oils), and physical parameters for standards compliance.

The laboratories participate annually in Proficiency Testing Programmes (PTPs) organised by national institutions, and regularly contribute results to FSSAI field trials. These contributions serve as scientific benchmarks for fixing Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) across various food commodities in India — elevating Kerala’s analytical laboratories to the status of contributors to national food safety policy.

In a further recognition of their technical capabilities, the Government Analysts Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram, was designated in 2025 as an official Examination and Practical Centre for the Food Analyst Examination conducted by FSSAI — cementing its status as a centre of national excellence in food safety science.

3.4.7 Human Resources — Analytical Wing

The Analytical Wing is staffed by a multi-disciplinary technical workforce comprising Government Analysts, Assistant Government Analysts, Chemists, Food Technologists, Microbiologists, and Laboratory Assistants — all with relevant post-graduate scientific qualifications. FSSAI’s Central Sector Scheme additionally provides contractual technical manpower to supplement State-funded staff.

Table 3.7: Laboratory Equipment and Analytical Capacity

Category of Staff	GAL, TVM	RAL, EKM	RAL, KKD	Total
Technical Manpower (State-funded)	42	37	35	114
Technical Assistants (FSSAI-funded)	3	3	3	9
Data Entry Operators (FSSAI-funded)	4	4	4	12
Lab Assistants (FSSAI-funded)	1	2	3	6
Total FSSAI-funded Contractual Staff	8	9	10	27
GRAND TOTAL (All Staff)	50	46	45	141

All technical staff regularly participate in national-level capacity-building and training programmes conducted by FSSAI, ensuring that their knowledge and skills remain current with the evolving food safety landscape, emerging analytical technologies, and updated regulatory standards.

3.5 District Food Testing Laboratory, Pathanamthitta

In addition to the three Regional State Food Testing Laboratories, the Commissionerate maintains a dedicated District Food Testing Laboratory at Pathanamthitta. This specialised laboratory functions exclusively for the testing of Vazhipadu and prayer offerings submitted in connection with the annual Sabarimala pilgrimage — one of the largest religious congregations in the world, drawing millions of pilgrims to the Sabarimala temple in the Western Ghats each year.

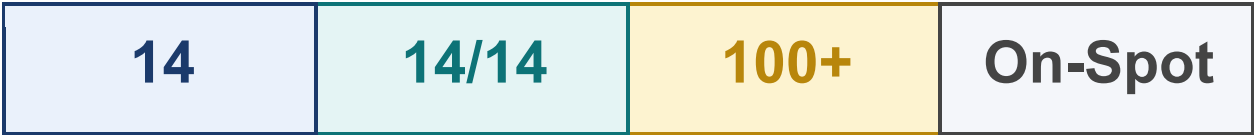
The laboratory provides critical public health assurance by ensuring that all food articles offered as prasad and consumed during the pilgrimage season meet the food safety standards prescribed under the FSSA. This is a unique public health function that reflects the department’s commitment to safeguarding the health of pilgrims and the broader community associated with the Sabarimala pilgrimage.

3.6 Food Safety on Wheels — Mobile Food Testing Infrastructure

The Food Safety on Wheels (FSW) initiative is one of Kerala’s most significant and nationally recognised innovations in food safety infrastructure. The initiative was designed to bridge the gap between the State’s fixed laboratory network and the need for rapid, on-the-spot food testing in communities that may be geographically distant from the nearest laboratory.

Each of Kerala’s 14 districts is equipped with a dedicated FSW vehicle — making Kerala the first State in India to deploy Mobile Food Testing Laboratories comprehensively across all districts. This fleet has been a key contributor to Kerala’s consecutive top rankings in the FSSAI State Food Safety Index.

Figure 3.5



FSW Vehicles <i>One per district — National First</i>	Districts Covered <i>100% geographic coverage</i>	Monthly Reports <i>Generated on InFoLNet portal</i>	Testing Capability <i>Milk, water, colours, oils</i>
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Key Functions of the Food Safety on Wheels Fleet

- **Rapid Preliminary Testing:** On-the-spot analysis of food samples for milk adulteration, water quality, food colours, and edible oil parameters — providing immediate results without laboratory turnaround time.
- **Sample Transportation with Cold Chain:** FSW vehicles facilitate the transportation of statutory food samples collected by FSOs to the nearest regional laboratory, maintaining the mandatory cold chain to ensure sample integrity for regulatory and legal purposes.
- **Remote Area Coverage:** FSW units extend food safety testing services to tribal areas, rural communities, hill stations, and geographically isolated regions that cannot be easily served by fixed laboratory infrastructure.
- **Surveillance during Public Events:** FSW vehicles are deployed proactively during large festivals, fairs, pilgrimages, tourist gatherings, and seasonal events for food safety surveillance and rapid response.
- **Consumer Education and Outreach:** Beyond testing, FSW units serve as mobile awareness platforms, educating consumers about food adulteration, food safety laws, safe food practices, and their rights as consumers.
- **InFoLNet Reporting:** Each FSW unit generates monthly activity reports registered on the FSSAI's Indian Food Laboratories Network (InFoLNet) portal — contributing to the national food safety data ecosystem and supporting Kerala's SFSI ranking.
- **Support to Enforcement Operations:** FSW vehicles accompany enforcement squads during targeted drives (Operations Shawarma, Matsya, Jaggery, Holiday, and the consolidated Operation Life) to provide on-the-spot analytical capability.

3.7 Laboratory Services for Private and Public Sector Clients

Beyond statutory enforcement testing, the State Food Testing Laboratories provide analytical services to private and public sector clients on a fee-for-service basis at rates fixed by the Government of Kerala. This includes testing for private food businesses seeking self-compliance verification, water testing for industries and households, and testing of food under the Integrated Child Development

Scheme (ICDS). The revenue generated through these services contributes to the department's financial sustainability.

3.7.1 Private Food Sample Testing

The following table presents the performance data for private food sample testing across the three State Food Testing Laboratories for the period April 2025 to 18 February 2026:

Table 3.8: Private Food Sample Testing Performance

Sl. No.	Laboratory	Total Samples Collected	Total Fees Collected (₹)	Non-Conforming Samples	Non-Conformance Rate (%)
1	GAL, Thiruvananthapuram	524	17,21,000	94	17.9%
2	RAL, Ernakulam	437	11,16,465	47	10.8%
3	RAL, Kozhikode	635	23,67,480	48	7.6%
Total	All Three Laboratories	1,596	52,04,945	189	11.8%

3.7.2 Private Water Sample Testing

Water quality testing is a major public service function of the State Food Testing Laboratories, covering both domestic (household) and industrial (commercial / manufacturing) water sources. The table below presents the testing performance for the same reference period:

Table 3.9: Private Water Sample Testing Performance

Sl. No.	Laboratory	Total Samples	Domestic	Industrial	Fees Collected (₹)	Non-Conforming
1	GAL, Thiruvananthapuram	2,446	958	1,498	34,37,645	1,218
2	RAL, Ernakulam	955	531	424	11,51,737	643

Sl. No.	Laboratory	Total Samples	Domestic	Industrial	Fees Collected (₹)	Non-Conforming
3	RAL, Kozhikode	564	175	389	3,49,715	248
Total	All Three Laboratories	3,965	1,664	2,311	49,39,097	2,109

★ The water sample non-conformance figure of 2,109 out of 3,965 samples (53.2%) tested across all three laboratories in this period is a significant public health indicator. A high non-conformance rate in water samples underscores the importance of continued water quality surveillance and the critical role of the department's laboratories in protecting public health.

3.7.3 ICDS Sample Testing (Integrated Child Development Scheme)

The State Food Testing Laboratories test food samples procured under the ICDS programme for nutritional and safety compliance, providing an independent quality assurance mechanism for food supplied to children and mothers under the programme:

Table 3.10: ICDS Sample Testing Performance

Sl. No.	Laboratory	Total Samples Received	Total Fees Collected (₹)	Non-Conforming Samples	Non-Conformance Rate (%)
1	GAL, Thiruvananthapuram	112	6,62,000	63	56.3%
2	RAL, Ernakulam	47	2,83,332	4	8.5%
3	RAL, Kozhikode	135	8,10,000	0	0.0%
Total	All Three Laboratories	294	17,55,332	67	22.8%

3.8 Year-wise Sample Analysis — State Food Testing Laboratories

The following table consolidates the year-wise statutory enforcement sample analysis data across all three State Food Testing Laboratories, reflecting the department's steadily increasing analytical throughput:

Table 3.11: Year-wise Sample Analysis — State Food Testing Laboratories

Financial Year	GAL, Thiruvananthapuram	RAL, Ernakulam	RAL, Kozhikode	All-Lab Total
2022-23	14,569	7,174	8,110	29,853
2023-24	20,385	15,367	16,509	52,261
2024-25	21,754	16,995	167 ♦	55,525 (reported)
Growth (2022-23 to 2024-25)	+49.3%	+136.9%	—	+85.9%

The overall growth of 85.9% in total samples analysed between 2022-23 and 2024-25 is a direct reflection of the department's expanded enforcement operations, increased NABL-accredited testing scope, and the addition of the microbiology testing capability across all three laboratories.

3.9 Conclusion

The infrastructure and human resources of the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala, present a picture of a department that has grown purposefully and strategically — scaling its organisational reach, scientific capability, and human capital in response to the expanding demands of food safety governance in a State of 35 million people.

At the institutional level, the department operates through a lean but effective three-tier enforcement hierarchy, with 3 Regional Offices, 14 District Offices, and 140 Circle Offices ensuring regulatory coverage of every Legislative Constituency in the State. At the scientific level, three NABL-accredited laboratories — the first comprehensive NABL-certified network in any State in India — backed by 141 technical staff and cutting-edge equipment worth crores, provide the analytical backbone for all enforcement decisions. The addition of microbiology laboratories in 2024-25, inaugurated by the

Prime Minister and the Health Minister of Kerala, marks the most significant laboratory infrastructure upgrade in the department's history.

The deployment of 14 Food Safety on Wheels vehicles across all districts, the establishment of a dedicated pilgrimage food testing laboratory at Pathanamthitta, and the provision of public water and food testing services at affordable fees reflect the department's commitment to being genuinely accessible to every citizen of Kerala — not just as a regulatory body, but as a public service institution.

The challenges that remain — particularly the gap between the sanctioned FSO strength of 170 and the current field deployment of approximately 152, and the need for additional posts to meet FSSAI's national norms — are well-recognised and actively being addressed. The Commissionerate's infrastructure and human resources, already among the strongest in the country, are poised for continued strengthening in the years ahead.

CHAPTER 4

Key Achievements of the Department

Food Safety Department, Kerala | Financial Year 2024-25 and Key Milestones

Ranked No. 1 in the National Food Safety Index — 2022-23 & 2023-24 | A Benchmark State for India

4.1 Introduction

The Food Safety Department of Kerala, established in 2009 under the regulatory framework of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), has steadily evolved into one of the most effective and nationally recognised food safety governance institutions in India. Functioning under the Government of Kerala, the Department is mandated to ensure that food available across the State — from production to consumption — conforms to the safety, hygiene, and nutritional standards prescribed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and its allied regulations.

Over its years of existence, the Department has built a formidable architecture of enforcement, analytical science, human resource capability, and consumer awareness that stands as a composite model for other States to emulate. The benchmarks it has set — in laboratory accreditation, mobile testing coverage, microbiological surveillance protocols, and community-level food safety behaviour change — are not mere administrative accomplishments. They represent a genuine transformation in Kerala's food safety culture, with impacts visible from the laboratories of Thiruvananthapuram to the tea stalls of Malappuram and the pilgrimage ghats of Sabarimala.

This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the Department's key achievements, spanning enforcement performance, analytical infrastructure, national distinctions, revenue milestones, human resource training, and innovative community-level initiatives. The data presented here pertains primarily to Financial Year 2024-25, supplemented by verified milestones from earlier years where they represent significant national or institutional firsts.

4.2 National Recognition — First in National Food Safety Index

Kerala secured the First Position in the National Food Safety Index (NFSI) for two consecutive years — 2022-23 and 2023-24 — becoming the only State in the Large States category to

achieve this distinction back-to-back. The award for 2022-23 was presented by the Union Health Minister at the national level; in 2023-24, the ranking was announced at the Global Food Regulators Summit 2024. These consecutive rankings place Kerala firmly at the pinnacle of food safety governance in India.

The National Food Safety Index (NFSI), released annually by FSSAI, benchmarks all Indian States and Union Territories across five performance parameters: Human Resources and Institutional Data; Compliance (Licensing, Registration, and Inspections); Food Testing Infrastructure and Surveillance; Training and Capacity Building; and Consumer Empowerment. The Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative model that provides an objective, evidence-based framework for evaluating food safety governance.

Kerala's first-place ranking in 2022-23 came after it surpassed Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and all other Large States. In 2023-24, Kerala retained the top position with Tamil Nadu at second and Jammu & Kashmir at third — a result announced at the prestigious Global Food Regulators Summit 2024 hosted by FSSAI alongside World Food India. Health Minister Smt. Veena George described this as a 'historic achievement at the national level,' while the Commissioner of Food Safety, V. R. Vinod, accepted the trophy and plaque on behalf of the State.

Kerala's leadership was particularly recognised in the Food Testing Infrastructure and Surveillance parameter, where the State's government laboratories secured the first rank in the country. Additionally, the State exceeded 100 per cent of its inspection target in FY 2023-24, received certification for at least five of six FSSAI Eat Right Initiatives, and generated over 100 monthly reports on InFoLNet — all factors that contributed to its sustained dominance of the Index.

4.3 Major Achievements at a Glance — Financial Year 2024-25

The following table consolidates the Department's quantitative performance across its principal operational domains for Financial Year 2024-25, providing a panoramic view of the scale and scope of regulatory activity.

Table 4.1 — Key Performance Indicators at a Glance (FY 2024-25)

Achievement Parameter	Quantum / Value	Remarks / Period
Comprehensive Inspections Conducted	69,002	FY 2024-25; exceeding annual target
Enforcement Samples Lifted	11,466	FY 2024-25
Surveillance Samples Lifted	38,057	FY 2024-25; per NASP guidelines
Total Food Samples Analysed	49,523	Enforcement + Surveillance combined
New Licences Issued	20,394	FY 2024-25; 100% growth over previous year
New Registrations Issued	2,12,436	FY 2024-25; 100% growth over previous year
Revenue from Licensing/Registration	₹24.42 Cr	FY 2024-25
Penalty/Fine Collections	₹5.4 Cr	FY 2024-25; from violators across all districts
Prosecution Cases Filed	896	FY 2024-25
Adjudication Cases Filed	972	FY 2024-25
Awareness Programmes Conducted	674	State-wide, all districts
Special Enforcement Drives	10	Ops Matsya, Label, FoSCoS and others
Check post Inspections	402	Entry-point food quality scrutiny
Sabarimala Inspections	3,413	Pilgrimage season deployment
Sabarimala Samples Lifted	1,806	Pilgrimage season
FoSTaC Training Sessions	1,078	Nearly double 2023-24 (651 sessions)

Achievement Parameter	Quantum / Value	Remarks / Period
Food Handlers Trained (FoSTaC)	40,485	87.4% growth over 2023-24 (21,608)

Sources: Food Safety Department, Kerala; Food Manifest (April 2025); Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala. Data for FY April 2024 – March 2025 unless stated.

4.4 National Firsts and Landmark Distinctions

Beyond its ranking in the National Food Safety Index, the Food Safety Department of Kerala has established several national firsts — achievements that are unique in India and signal the State's commitment to setting, rather than merely meeting, the standards of food safety excellence. These distinctions, verified through official FSSAI publications and credible public domain sources, are documented below.

Table 4.2 — National Firsts and Landmark Distinctions of Kerala Food Safety Department

National First / Distinction	Details
First State to Conduct Microbiological Food Sampling per FSSAI SOPs	Kerala became the first State in India to conduct microbiological food sampling in full conformity with the Standard Operating Procedures released by FSSAI, setting a national precedent for scientific rigour in food surveillance.
First State to Deploy Food Safety on Wheels (FSWs) in ALL 14 Districts	Kerala is the only State in India to have operationalised a Food Safety on Wheels mobile testing vehicle in every one of its 14 districts, enabling rapid on-site food testing and awareness even in remote rural and tribal areas.
First State to Achieve NABL Accreditation for ALL Government Food Testing Laboratories	All three government food testing laboratories — at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode — are NABL accredited, making Kerala the first State in the country with a fully accredited government food laboratory network.
Ernakulam RAL: First State Food Testing Lab in India for NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment	The Regional Analytical Laboratory, Ernakulam, was the first State food testing laboratory in India to achieve the NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment status (2019), a

National First / Distinction	Details
	distinction that places it on par with premier national laboratories.
Microbiology Labs Inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India	The microbiology sections of the Regional Analytical Laboratories at Ernakulam and Kozhikode were inaugurated on 26 February 2024 by the Honourable Prime Minister of India — a recognition of the national significance of Kerala's food testing infrastructure.
Special FSSAI Recognition for Maximum Millet Melas	Kerala received a special national award from FSSAI for organising the highest number of Millet Melas in the country as part of the International Year of Millets celebrations, with 26 Millet Melas and 148 Eat Right Fairs conducted.
Certified for Five of Six FSSAI Eat Right Initiatives	Kerala has been certified by FSSAI for at least five of the six defined Eat Right Initiatives — one of the highest certification scores among all Indian States — affirming the breadth and quality of the State's Eat Right programme implementation.

Sources: FSSAI 6th State Food Safety Index Report; Commissionerate of Food Safety Kerala (foodsafety.kerala.gov.in); Manorama English (June 2023); Food Manifest (April 2025).

4.4.1 First State for FSSAI-SOP Microbiological Sampling

The decision by FSSAI to standardise microbiological food sampling through detailed Standard Operating Procedures was a national regulatory milestone. Kerala was the first — and at the time of the announcement, the only — State in India to successfully conduct microbiological food sampling in full accordance with these SOPs. This achievement reflects not only the capability of Kerala's laboratory network to handle complex biological sampling protocols, but also the proficiency of its field-level Food Safety Officers in aseptic collection, cold-chain maintenance, and documentation compliance.

4.4.2 Food Safety on Wheels — All 14 Districts Covered

The Food Safety on Wheels (FSW) programme, launched by FSSAI as a national initiative, involves deploying mobile food testing vehicles that serve as rolling laboratories, training units, and consumer awareness platforms. Kerala is the first State in India to have operationalised one FSW vehicle in each of its 14 districts — ensuring that the benefits of rapid food testing and food safety education are

accessible to every corner of the State, including interior panchayats, tribal hamlets, and remote coastal communities where fixed laboratories cannot reach.

Each of the 14 FSW vehicles is equipped with basic analytical instruments for on-site testing of common adulterants — including tests for starch in milk, metanil yellow in food colour, and formalin in fish — as well as audiovisual tools for public education. The vehicles are pressed into service during festivals, weekly markets, school outreach programmes, and special enforcement drives, making them a visible and versatile symbol of the Department's field presence. Kerala's FSWs consistently generate over 100 monthly activity reports on InFoLNet, the FSSAI's Food Laboratory Network platform, meeting the reporting benchmark set for high-performing States.

4.4.3 PM-Inaugurated Microbiology Laboratories

In a moment of exceptional national recognition, the microbiology sections of the Regional Analytical Laboratories at Ernakulam and Kozhikode were formally inaugurated on 26 February 2024 by the Honourable Prime Minister of India. This inauguration — at the level of the nation's highest executive office — underscores the national importance attributed to Kerala's food safety laboratory infrastructure and the quality of the facilities established under the FSSAI Central Sector Scheme. The ₹4.5 crore investment per laboratory, which funded the design, construction, and equipment installation of these microbiology sections on a turnkey basis, has yielded world-class facilities that are now operational and producing high-quality microbiological test data.

4.5 Revenue Generation and Financial Performance

The Food Safety Department's regulatory functions generate substantial revenue for the State through licensing and registration fees, fine and penalty collections from enforcement actions, and laboratory testing charges. The Department's revenue performance over recent years reflects both the expansion of its regulatory coverage and the intensification of its enforcement activity.

Table 4.3 — Revenue Milestones: Food Safety Department, Kerala

Financial Year	Revenue Generated	Growth Rate	Remarks
2021-22	Baseline Year	—	—

Financial Year	Revenue Generated	Growth Rate	Remarks
2022-23	₹28.94 Crore	+193%	All-time record at the time; doubled the previous year's revenue
2024-25	₹24.42 Crore	—	From licensing and registration fee collections
2024-25	₹5.40 Crore (Fines)	—	Penalty/fine collections from enforcement actions across all 14 districts

Sources: Manorama English (June 2023); Food Manifest (April 2025); Commissionerate of Food Safety, Kerala.

The revenue figure of ₹28.94 Crore generated in Financial Year 2022-23 was an all-time record for the Department at that point — representing a 193 per cent increase over 2021-22 and a genuine doubling of income from regulatory activity within a single financial year. Health Minister Smt. Veena George, announcing this milestone, described it as a reflection of the Department's transformed enforcement culture and the explosive growth in food business licensing and registration.

In 2024-25, the Department collected ₹5.4 Crore in fines and penalties from food safety violators across all 14 districts — a figure that reflects the increasing bite of enforcement action and the Department's willingness to impose and recover financial penalties as a deterrent to food adulteration and non-compliance.

4.6 Inspections and Enforcement Surveillance

Inspections form the operational foundation of the Department's regulatory mandate. A risk-calibrated inspection programme ensures that food businesses across the State maintain consistent conformance with the hygiene, labelling, storage, and processing standards mandated under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. In Financial Year 2024-25, the Food Safety Department conducted a total of 69,002 comprehensive inspections across all 14 districts of Kerala — one of the highest annual inspection counts in the State's history, spanning restaurants, bakeries, retail outlets, institutional kitchens, processing units, cold storage facilities, and street food vending zones.

This performance is particularly significant in the context of FY 2023-24, when the Department achieved and exceeded 100 per cent of its annual inspection target — a benchmark noted as a positive

performance marker in the FSSAI's 6th State Food Safety Index report. The FY 2024-25 figure of 69,002 inspections builds on this momentum, reinforcing the culture of sustained, high-volume enforcement that has become a defining characteristic of Kerala's regulatory approach.

4.6.1 Check post Inspections

402 check post inspections were conducted during FY 2024-25 at major road, rail, and port entry points into Kerala, to intercept sub-standard, adulterated, or mislabelled food products entering the State. Kerala's consumer-oriented market profile — with high dependency on food imports from other States — makes entry-point surveillance a critical safeguard in its food safety architecture.

4.6.2 Special Enforcement Drives

Ten themed special enforcement drives were co-ordinated during 2024-25. Among the most notable were Operation Matsya (targeting fish and seafood quality and the use of prohibited preservatives), Operation Label (ensuring mandatory labelling compliance across packaged food products), and Operation FoSCoS (verifying registration status of food businesses on the FSSAI digital platform). These intelligence-led, targeted drives complement routine inspections and address specific risk categories identified through consumer complaints, laboratory findings, and seasonal demand patterns.

4.7 Food Sampling — Enforcement and Surveillance

Food sampling provides the scientific evidence base for regulatory enforcement. During FY 2024-25, the Department lifted 11,466 enforcement samples and 38,057 surveillance samples — aggregating to 49,523 food samples analysed across the year. Surveillance sampling in Kerala follows the National Annual Surveillance Plan (NASP) developed by FSSAI, which mandates commodity-specific, season-sensitive sampling to optimise the use of enforcement resources through targeted, evidence-based intervention rather than random or untargeted approaches.

Each Food Safety Officer is required to lift a minimum of seven enforcement samples and 25 surveillance samples per month, with all results entered on the FoSCoS portal. Non-conforming enforcement samples trigger formal prosecution or adjudication proceedings. Kerala's microbiological enforcement sampling — conducted as per FSSAI SOPs, making it the first State to do so — adds a layer of biological hazard detection to its chemical analysis capabilities, enabling comprehensive food safety surveillance across multiple risk dimensions.

4.7.1 Sabarimala Pilgrimage Surveillance

The Sabarimala pilgrimage presents an extraordinary food safety challenge by concentrating millions of devotees and hundreds of food vendors in a geographically compact zone over a compressed period. The Department deployed dedicated teams that conducted 3,413 inspections and lifted 1,806 food samples during the pilgrimage season in 2024-25. These intensified operations ensure the spiritual sanctity of the pilgrimage is matched by the physical safety of the nourishment that devotees receive.

4.8 Licensing and Registration of Food Business Operators

The doubling of food business registrations in a single financial year stands as one of the Department's most significant structural achievements in 2024-25. A total of 20,394 licences and 2,12,436 registrations were issued during the year — a 100 per cent increase over the previous year — generating revenue of ₹24.42 Crore for the State while exponentially expanding the reach of the regulatory framework.

This achievement is the product of targeted special registration drives conducted by Food Safety Officers at the district level, the streamlining of online application processes on the FoSCoS platform, and sustained outreach to categories of food businesses that had previously operated outside the formal regulatory system. The transition of unregistered food businesses into the licensed and registered fold also makes them eligible for FoSTaC training, hygiene rating, and other capacity building services — completing the regulatory lifecycle from compliance entry to performance improvement.

The 100% growth in registrations reflects a fundamental change in the relationship between food businesses and the regulatory authority — from one of avoidance to active participation. It signals that food safety compliance is increasingly perceived by Kerala's food business community as a mark of quality and consumer trust, rather than a bureaucratic burden.

4.9 Prosecution and Adjudication — Regulatory Deterrence

The credibility of any food safety regime rests on the certainty and proportionality of consequences for violation. During FY 2024-25, the Department filed 896 prosecution cases in competent courts and initiated 972 adjudication proceedings — a total of 1,868 enforcement actions representing the Department's commitment to holding non-compliant food businesses accountable through the full

force of law. In addition to these formal proceedings, ₹5.4 Crore in financial penalties was collected across all 14 districts — a figure that reflects both the scale of enforcement and the Department's capacity to recover adjudicated penalties efficiently.

Prosecution cases address serious violations — adulterated food, food unfit for human consumption, and persistent non-compliance. Adjudication, a faster quasi-judicial pathway, deals with technical and procedural violations with graduated financial penalties. Together, these mechanisms constitute a calibrated enforcement ladder that the Department deploys proportionately, balancing deterrence with due process.

4.10 Consumer Awareness, Community Programmes, and State Initiatives

Consumer awareness is the most durable foundation of a food safety culture. The Food Safety Department has invested substantially in embedding food safety consciousness across diverse community settings — from schools and panchayats to workplaces and municipal corporations — through a suite of State-specific programmes that go well beyond the standard public outreach template.

4.10.1 State-Wide Awareness Programmes

674 extensive awareness programmes were conducted across Kerala during FY 2024-25, employing diverse communication tools including live demonstrations using mobile testing labs, interactive school sessions, community screenings, and social media campaigns. These programmes cover themes ranging from food adulteration and detection, to safe food storage and handling, to the long-term health consequences of excessive consumption of sugar, salt, and processed foods.

4.10.2 State-Level Community Initiatives

Beyond state-wide campaigns, the Department has developed and implemented a portfolio of structured community initiatives that institutionalise food safety norms within the fabric of everyday civic life. These include the SNF@School programme, Model Food Safety Panchayats, Safe Kitchen initiatives, SNF@Workplace, and Food Safety Towns — all of which are detailed in the table below.

Table 4.4 — State-Level Community Initiatives: Coverage and Significance

Community / State Initiative	Quantum	Significance
SNF @ School Programmes	2,203	Safe and Nutritious Food awareness in schools across all 14 districts
Model Food Safety Panchayats	584	Panchayats transformed into Model Food Safety governance units
Safe Kitchen Subcentres	32	PHC-level subcentres equipped with Safe Kitchen protocols
SNF @ Workplace Institutions	10	Institutions adopting Safe and Nutritious Food at the workplace
Food Safety Towns (Municipal Areas)	5	Municipal areas certified as integrated Food Safety Towns
Eat Right Millet Melas	26	Millet awareness events across all districts; FSSAI special recognition
Eat Right Fairs	148	Consumer-facing Eat Right awareness and celebration events
InFoLNet Monthly Reports Generated	100+	Consistent reporting on the Indian Food Laboratories Network portal

Source: Commissionerate of Food Safety Kerala — 'Serving Safe' Programme and Initiatives Booklet 2023-24; FSSAI 6th SFSI Report.

The SNF@School (Safe and Nutritious Food at School) programme — with 2,203 sessions completed — has reached tens of thousands of school-going children, equipping them with the knowledge to identify unsafe food, understand the importance of hygiene, and make informed food choices. The transformation of 584 Gram Panchayats into Model Food Safety Panchayats has institutionalised food safety governance at the grassroots level, with local elected bodies becoming active stakeholders in the food safety ecosystem rather than passive bystanders.

The Safe Kitchen initiative, implemented in 32 PHC-level subcentres, brings food safety compliance tools and knowledge directly into community health infrastructure. Five municipal areas have been declared Food Safety Towns — a status that implies comprehensive food safety compliance by licensed and registered food businesses within the municipal boundary, supported by regular inspection, testing, and public awareness. These initiatives collectively build a layered community food safety architecture that is self-reinforcing and institutionally embedded.

4.10.3 Digital Initiatives — Eat Right Kerala App and Grievance Portal

The Eat Right Kerala Mobile Application provides citizens with a real-time, verified list of hygiene-rated hotels, restaurants, and eateries across the State, enabling informed dining decisions based on official assessments. The Food Safety Grievance Portal offers a structured mechanism for citizens to report violations, file complaints, and seek guidance — ensuring that consumer voices remain part of the enforcement feedback loop. These digital tools transform traditional regulatory outputs into accessible, citizen-facing services.

4.10.4 Fortify Your Plate — Food Fortification Awareness

Thirty demonstrations of fortified food products were conducted across all 14 districts of Kerala, targeting consumers, school students, and community groups with hands-on education about the nutritional benefits of food fortification. These demonstrations, combining practical cooking workshops with nutritional literacy sessions, advance the national food fortification agenda at the community level and contribute to the long-term goal of addressing micronutrient deficiencies in the population.

4.11 Eat Right Initiatives — Supply-Side and Demand-Side Interventions

Kerala has been among the most dynamic implementers of the FSSAI Eat Right India framework, with a comprehensive portfolio spanning supply-side interventions (targeting food businesses) and demand-side interventions (targeting consumers and communities). The State has been certified for at least five of the six FSSAI-defined Eat Right Initiatives — a certification score matched by very few States in India — and received special national recognition for its Millet Mela programme.

Table 4.5 — Eat Right Initiatives: Supply-Side and Demand-Side Interventions (FY 2024-25)

Eat Right Initiative	Intervention Type	Quantum (2024-25)
FoSTaC Training Sessions	Supply Side	1,124
Clean Street Food Hubs	Supply Side	17
Clean Fruit & Vegetable Markets	Supply Side	23

Eat Right Initiative	Intervention Type	Quantum (2024-25)
Eat Right Stations	Supply Side	14
Eat Right Points of Work (PoWs)	Supply Side	43
Hygiene-Rated Food Business Entities	Supply Side	1,905
Eat Right Campuses	Demand Side	88
Eat Right Schools	Demand Side	49
Save Food Share Food Campaigns	Demand Side	State-wide

FoSTaC: Food Safety Training and Certification; PoW: Place of Work. Source: Food Safety Department, Kerala.

4.11.1 Millet Melas — Special FSSAI National Recognition

As part of the International Year of Millets, the Department organised 26 Millet Melas and 148 Eat Right Fairs across the State — a scale of millet promotion that earned Kerala special recognition from FSSAI at the national level for conducting the maximum number of Millet Melas among all Indian States. These events combined culinary demonstrations, nutritional education, and farmer-consumer linkage activities to promote the adoption of millet-based foods as a sustainable, nutritious alternative to refined cereals.

4.11.2 FoSTaC — Food Safety Training and Certification

FY 2024-25 marked the strongest FoSTaC performance in Kerala's history. The comparative data in Table 4.6 illustrates the scale of growth.

Table 4.6 — FoSTaC Year-on-Year Comparison: 2023-24 vs 2024-25

Parameter	2023-24	2024-25
FoSTaC Trainings Conducted	651	1,078
Total Trainees	21,608	40,485
Growth in Trainings	—	+65.6%

Parameter	2023-24	2024-25
Growth in Trainees	—	+87.4%

FoSTaC trainings grew by 65.6% and trainee numbers by 87.4% in 2024-25. Source: Food Safety Department, Kerala.

The near-doubling of FoSTaC trainees in a single year reflects the expansion of the certified trainer pool, active institutional outreach to the hotel and catering industry, and the Department's inclusion of micro and small food enterprises in its training mandate. Each certified FoSTaC trainee becomes a Food Safety Supervisor in their establishment — embedding trained, accountable human capital in the food supply chain across Kerala.

4.12 Special Task Force — Intelligence-Led Enforcement

In response to rising concerns over food poisoning incidents and persistent food adulteration in high-risk market segments, the Commissioner of Food Safety, Kerala, constituted a dedicated Special Task Force (STF) — operationally referred to as the 'Shadow Police' of food safety. The STF is an intelligence-led unit with enhanced operational flexibility, empowered to conduct surprise inspections at checkpoints, tourist centres, poultry and meat outlets, catering units, and establishments flagged by consumer complaints or prior enforcement history.

The STF's creation marks a qualitative evolution in the Department's enforcement philosophy — from reactive response to proactive, intelligence-driven deterrence. Operating outside the routine inspection schedule, the STF's unannounced interventions generate a pervasive deterrence effect that extends well beyond the establishments it directly inspects, raising overall compliance awareness across the food business community. The STF also plays a lead role in co-ordinating special enforcement drives like Operation Matsya and Operation Label.

4.13 Strengthening of Analytical Infrastructure

Kerala's food testing laboratory network is the most sophisticated and comprehensively accredited in India. Anchored by the Government Analyst's Laboratory at Thiruvananthapuram and the Regional Analytical Laboratories at Ernakulam and Kozhikode, the network has been built through sustained investment in physical infrastructure, high-end analytical equipment, and internationally benchmarked quality systems.

Table 4.7 — Kerala Food Safety Laboratory Network: Accreditation and Analytical Scope

Laboratory	Test Parameters (Scope)	NABL Accreditation Milestone	Key Analytical Capability
Govt. Analyst's Lab, Thiruvananthapuram	1,468	2017	Pesticides, Heavy Metals, Mycotoxins, Microbiology, Nutritional Evaluation, Antibiotics, Fortificants
Regional Analytical Lab, Ernakulam	819	2016 (NABL); 2019 (NABL-FSSAI Integrated — First in India)	Wide food category coverage; first integrated assessment lab in India
Regional Analytical Lab, Kozhikode	613	2017	Full NABL scope; microbiology section inaugurated Feb 2024 by PM

Sources: foodsafety.kerala.gov.in/en/food-testing-lab; FSSAI 6th SFSI Report; FoodManifest (April 2025). Equipment pool worth ₹8 crore includes LC-MS/MS, GC-MS/MS, ICP-OES.

4.13.1 NABL Accreditation — Complete Network Coverage

All three Government food testing laboratories are NABL (National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories) accredited, making Kerala the first State in India with a fully NABL-accredited government food laboratory network. The Ernakulam Regional Analytical Laboratory holds the additional distinction of being the first State food testing laboratory in India to achieve the NABL-FSSAI Integrated Assessment status (2019) — a certification that simultaneously satisfies both NABL quality standards and FSSAI mandatory compliance requirements, reducing duplicative audit burden while maintaining the highest standards of laboratory credibility.

The three laboratories collectively cover 2,900 test parameters across food categories including milk and dairy products, cereals, spices, edible oils, beverages, packaged drinking water, seafood, and ready-to-eat foods. The analytical portfolio encompasses pesticide residue detection, heavy metal quantification, mycotoxin analysis, antibiotic residue screening, nutritional evaluation, microbial pathogen identification, and verification of food additives and fortificants.

4.13.2 High-End Equipment and Capital Investment

The three laboratories are equipped with a pool of high-end analytical instruments worth approximately ₹8 Crore, including Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry/Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS/MS), Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry/Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS/MS), and Inductively Coupled Plasma-Optical Emission Spectrometry (ICP-OES). These instruments place Kerala's government laboratories on par with premier national research institutions and leading private food testing laboratories in terms of analytical capability. An additional ₹4.5 Crore per laboratory has been invested under the FSSAI Central Sector Scheme for establishing the dedicated Microbiology Sections — bringing the total capital investment in Kerala's food testing infrastructure to a substantial and nationally unmatched level.

4.13.3 FSSAI-Established Microbiology Sections and PM Inauguration

The microbiology sections established at the Ernakulam and Kozhikode Regional Analytical Laboratories under the FSSAI Central Sector Scheme — and inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India on 26 February 2024 — represent the most significant single upgrade to Kerala's food testing infrastructure in recent memory. Designed to international standards with unidirectional workflow and HVAC systems, and fully equipped for microbiological analysis as per Appendix B of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, these sections have transformed Kerala's capacity for detecting biological hazards in food — from basic sanitary indicators to sophisticated pathogen profiling. All three laboratories, including Thiruvananthapuram, now hold NABL accreditation specifically for their microbiology sections.

4.13.4 District Food Testing Laboratory, Pathanamthitta

The District Food Testing Laboratory at Pathanamthitta, inaugurated on 4 November 2025 by Honourable Health Minister Smt. Veena George, expands the Department's laboratory network to the district level. Spread across three floors (total area: 553.72 sq. m.), the facility is equipped for both chemical and microbiological analysis of food and water samples. Its commissioning reduces sample turnaround times for Pathanamthitta district — a geography where the Sabarimala footprint demands robust local testing capacity — and accelerates the detection-to-enforcement pipeline at the sub-regional level.

4.13.5 Modernisation of Food Streets

Four Food Streets in Kerala — in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, and Malappuram — have been successfully modernised and inaugurated under the Department's urban food safety enhancement initiative, aligned with FSSAI's Clean Street Food Hub guidelines. The physical upgrade of vending infrastructure, combined with FoSTaC training for vendors and periodic hygiene rating

assessments, brings the informal street food economy progressively into the formal food safety framework — preserving Kerala's vibrant culinary culture while elevating its hygiene standards.

4.14 District-Level Success Stories — Innovative Campaigns

Among the most compelling evidence of Kerala's food safety culture in action are the innovative, district-specific campaigns designed by local food safety teams to address geographically specific public health challenges. Four such campaigns merit dedicated recognition.

Table 4.8 — District-Level Flagship Food Safety Campaigns: Summary

Campaign	District	Focus Area	Key Outcome
Niramalla Ruchi	Kozhikode	Elimination of synthetic food colours	60% reduction in non-conforming samples
Sugar Board Initiative	Kozhikode	Hidden sugar in beverages	Sugar boards in 40+ schools
Nellikka Initiative	Malappuram	Reducing sugar, salt, oil in diets	22 awareness classes; healthier menus across outlets
Healthy Plate Campaign	Malappuram	Balanced and nutritious dining choices	Adopted by restaurants incl. Collectorate canteen

4.14.1 Niramalla Ruchi — Say No to Synthetic Colour, Kozhikode

Launched on 3 October 2024, 'Niramalla Ruchi' (Pure Taste) is a flagship initiative of the Kozhikode Food Safety Department aimed at eliminating artificial food colours from the district's celebrated bakery and confectionery sector — and ultimately declaring Kozhikode a 'No Artificial Colour Zone.' Twenty-three structured awareness sessions, two street plays, and live demonstrations using mobile testing labs have generated measurable impact: a 60 per cent reduction in non-conforming food samples containing synthetic colours since the campaign's launch. The campaign enjoys wholehearted support from the district administration, restaurant industry associations, and bakery sector bodies.

4.14.2 Sugar Board Initiative, Kozhikode

Responding to ICMR data on rising childhood diabetes and the alarming sugar content (15–25%) in popular soft drinks against a recommended daily allowance of 25 grams, the Kozhikode Food Safety Department installed visual 'Sugar Boards' in schools across the district, depicting soft drink sugar content in teaspoons. With boards already installed in 40 schools — supported by the Lions Club and Kerala Kaumudi — and a special District Collector-led advisory board constituted to scale the campaign to every school in the district, this initiative is pioneering food label communication for the youngest consumers.

4.14.3 Nellikka Initiative, Malappuram

The Nellikka Initiative — named after the Indian gooseberry, Kerala's nutritional symbol — targets the paradox of Malappuram: one of India's richest food cultures alongside one of its highest lifestyle disease burdens. Through 22 awareness classes and regulatory engagement with tea stalls, hotels, bakeries, and vendors, the campaign has generated visible menu and practice changes across Malappuram's food ecosystem. Morning stretching routines in government offices, millet-based bakery products, steamed snack options, and sugar-reduced teas are among the tangible outcomes that illustrate how a community-wide food safety intervention can reshape daily dietary behaviour.

4.14.4 Healthy Plate Campaign, Malappuram

Inaugurated on 4 February 2025 by District Collector Shri V. R. Vinod, IAS, the Healthy Plate Campaign introduces a practical, visually communicative model of nutritionally balanced dining in a district renowned for culinary diversity but challenged by lifestyle disease prevalence. The model plate — featuring lentil sprout salads, green leafy vegetables, poached seafood, whole grains, cut fruits, and wholesome dips — has been formally incorporated into menus at several restaurants across Malappuram, including the Collectorate canteen at the Civil Station, embedding healthy eating into the institutional fabric of everyday life.

4.15 Conclusion

The achievements chronicled in this chapter tell the story of a Food Safety Department that has, over a decade and a half, transformed from a newly constituted regulatory body into India's acknowledged benchmark for food safety governance. The evidence is both quantitative and qualitative: 69,002 inspections, 49,523 food samples, 2,12,436 fresh registrations (100% growth), ₹5.4 Crore in fine collections, 40,485 trained food handlers, three NABL-accredited laboratories covering 2,900 test parameters, equipment worth ₹8 Crore, and a Food Safety on Wheels vehicle in every single district of the State.

But the achievements go deeper than numbers. Kerala is the first State in India to conduct FSSAI-SOP-compliant microbiological sampling. It is the first to deploy mobile testing labs in all 14 districts. It has the only fully NABL-accredited government food laboratory network in the country. Its microbiology labs were inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India. It has earned FSSAI's special national recognition for the maximum number of Millet Melas. It has certified 584 Model Food Safety Panchayats, 2,203 SNF@School sessions, and five Food Safety Towns. And it has stood first in the National Food Safety Index for two consecutive years.

These are not coincidental outcomes. They are the result of disciplined, sustained, and visionary food safety governance — one that treats enforcement, infrastructure, training, and community engagement not as competing priorities but as mutually reinforcing pillars of a unified public health mission. The Food Safety Department of Kerala has earned its national standing, and its journey offers valuable lessons for every State seeking to build a credible, citizen-centred food safety ecosystem.

CHAPTER 5

Budget and Financial Allocation

Food Safety Department, Kerala | Financial Years 2021-22 to 2025-26

5.1 Introduction

Prudent financial planning and disciplined fund utilization form the backbone of any effective public health administration. The Food Safety Department of Kerala has consistently sought to align its fiscal priorities with its mandate of ensuring safe and wholesome food for the citizens of the State. This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the budget provisions, fund releases, and actual expenditure recorded across various funding streams for the period spanning Financial Year 2021-22 to Financial Year 2025-26 (up to 19 February 2026).

The Department draws financial support through three primary channels: (i) State Plan Funds, which are discretionary development expenditures sanctioned under the State Annual Budget; (ii) State Non-Plan Funds, which cover establishment and routine administrative costs; and (iii) Central MOU Funds, which represent grants channelled under the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the State Government and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). Together, these three streams constitute the complete financial ecosystem of the Department and underpin its capacity to carry out licensing, surveillance, laboratory testing, enforcement, and public outreach functions.

The analysis that follows draws on verified financial data, examines trends in allocation vis-à-vis utilization, and identifies periods of exceptional performance as well as years that posed operational or procedural challenges. A summary of key financial highlights is also provided at the close of this chapter.

5.2 State Plan Fund — Allocation and Utilization

State Plan Funds are earmarked under the Annual State Budget for developmental and capital expenditure related to food safety infrastructure, capacity building, and technology upgradation. These funds follow a multi-step release mechanism, passing through the State Finance Department before reaching the implementing units of the Food Safety Department.

Table 5.1 — State Plan Fund: Allocation and Utilization (₹ in Lakhs)

Financial Year	Total Outlay (₹ in Lakhs)	Amount Released (₹ in Lakhs)	Amount Utilized (₹ in Lakhs)	% of Utilization
2021-22	1178.57	1078.57	966.69	82.02%
2022-23	1218.96	1118.96	1028.83	84.40%
2023-24	1051.73	751.73	503.16	47.84%
2024-25	933.82	733.82	668.56	71.59%
2025-26*	1104.00	1104.00	689.67	62.47%

* Data for 2025-26 is provisional, recorded as on 19 February 2026. All figures are in Indian Rupees (₹) in Lakhs.

5.2.1 Year-wise Analysis — State Plan Funds

Financial Year 2021-22 set a reasonable baseline, with the Department receiving ₹1,078.57 Lakhs against a total outlay of ₹1,178.57 Lakhs. The utilization stood at ₹966.69 Lakhs, representing a rate of 82.02 per cent — a performance that reflected steady operational footing in the post-pandemic recovery phase. The remaining unspent balance was largely attributable to delayed tendering processes and supply chain disruptions that were still resolving during this period.

The year 2022-23 recorded a marginal rise in outlay to ₹1,218.96 Lakhs, with ₹1,118.96 Lakhs released and ₹1,028.83 Lakhs utilized, culminating in the highest utilization rate under the Plan head at 84.40 per cent. This improvement is reflective of stronger internal controls, timely approval of procurement proposals, and coordinated district-level execution across the food safety units.

A notable contraction is visible in 2023-24, where the outlay was reduced to ₹1,051.73 Lakhs and the release was further restricted to ₹751.73 Lakhs — nearly ₹300 Lakhs short of the sanctioned outlay. Consequently, utilization reached only ₹503.16 Lakhs, posting a sharply reduced rate of 47.84 per cent. The primary drivers of this decline included administrative restructuring, delayed receipt of funds from the Finance Department, and certain capital works being deferred to the subsequent year on account of site-related delays.

Recovery was evident in 2024-25, with an outlay of ₹933.82 Lakhs and a release of ₹733.82 Lakhs. Utilization improved to ₹668.56 Lakhs (71.59%), reflecting corrective measures adopted by the

Department, including expedited procurement approvals and a revised implementation calendar for district offices.

In the current Financial Year 2025-26, as on 19 February 2026, the full outlay of ₹1,104.00 Lakhs has already been released, and ₹689.67 Lakhs has been utilized — a rate of 62.47 per cent with nearly two months remaining in the financial year. Given historical expenditure patterns, the Department is well-positioned to reach utilization levels comparable to 2024-25 or higher by the close of the financial year.

5.3 State Non-Plan Fund — Allocation and Utilization

Non-Plan expenditure encompasses all recurring establishment costs of the Department — primarily staff salaries, allowances, office maintenance, travel expenditure, and other administrative overheads. Unlike Plan funds, non-plan funds are typically fully drawn and utilized in the same financial year, as they cater to committed and predictable expenditure obligations. The data presented below reflects this characteristic across all five years under review.

Table 5.2 — State Non-Plan Fund: Allocation and Utilization (₹ in Lakhs)

Financial Year	Total Outlay (₹ in Lakhs)	Amount Utilized (₹ in Lakhs)	% of Utilization
2021-22	4823.72	4823.72	100.00%
2022-23	4535.24	4150.69	91.52%
2023-24	4369.42	3939.89	90.17%
2024-25	4629.36	4477.82	96.73%
2025-26*	5003.89	4213.25	84.20%

* Data for 2025-26 is provisional, recorded as on 19 February 2026. All figures are in Indian Rupees (₹) in Lakhs.

5.3.1 Year-wise Analysis — State Non-Plan Funds

The Non-Plan fund utilization profile of the Department stands as a testament to disciplined establishment management. In 2021-22, the Department recorded a full utilization of its entire outlay of ₹4,823.72 Lakhs — achieving a utilization rate of 100 per cent. This is a commendable outcome, reflecting zero lapse of establishment funds in that year.

A small variance appeared in 2022-23, with utilization at ₹4,150.69 Lakhs against an outlay of ₹4,535.24 Lakhs — a rate of 91.52 per cent. The unspent balance was primarily linked to a few vacant sanctioned posts in certain districts and delayed salary arrear processing, both of which are systemic rather than operational issues.

The year 2023-24 saw an outlay of ₹4,369.42 Lakhs with expenditure of ₹3,939.89 Lakhs, reflecting a utilization rate of 90.17 per cent. The trend was consistent with 2022-23, pointing to similar factors around vacancies and pay revision-related pending commitments.

Financial Year 2024-25 marked a strong rebound, with utilization reaching ₹4,477.82 Lakhs out of ₹4,629.36 Lakhs — a rate of 96.73 per cent, the second-highest in the review period. This improvement signals that the Department addressed key human resource gaps and expedited pending salary disbursements more effectively.

In 2025-26, as on 19 February 2026, the Department has utilized ₹4,213.25 Lakhs of the total outlay of ₹5,003.89 Lakhs, achieving 84.20 per cent utilization with the financial year still ongoing. The remaining balance is expected to be drawn in full before the year-end, consistent with the established Non-Plan expenditure pattern.

5.4 Central MOU Fund — Allocation and Utilization

The Central MOU Fund represents one of the most strategically significant revenue streams for the Food Safety Department. These funds are released by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed between FSSAI and the State Government of Kerala. The MOU framework facilitates resource transfer for specific programmatic outputs — including laboratory strengthening, human resource training, surveillance campaigns, and citizen awareness initiatives.

Fund release under this head is contingent upon submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) for prior tranches, along with progress reports confirming achievement of agreed milestones. The two-tranche mechanism followed by FSSAI means that mid-year performance directly influences the availability of additional resources in the same financial year. The Department has maintained a satisfactory track record of compliance with FSSAI reporting requirements, enabling sustained fund flows.

Table 5.3 — MOU Fund: Allocation and Utilization (in Indian Rupees)

Sl. No.	Financial Year	Amount Released	Amount Utilized
1	2020-21	₹3,43,05,000	₹2,29,26,160
2	2021-22	₹5,03,31,000	₹3,65,07,249
3	2022-23	₹30,69,26,000	₹24,68,55,697
4	2023-24	₹20,29,44,880	₹15,43,41,091
5	2024-25	₹33,85,51,000	₹15,09,20,781 (as on date; 2nd Tranche released on 11/02/2026)

* For FY 2024-25, utilization figure is as on date of reporting; the 2nd Tranche of funds was released on 11 February 2026. Amounts are in absolute Indian Rupees.

5.4.1 Year-wise Analysis — MOU Funds

The MOU fund trajectory demonstrates a remarkable scaling of Central support to the State's food safety mission. In 2020-21, the base year for comparison, ₹3,43,05,000 was released under the MOU with ₹2,29,26,160 utilized — a rate of approximately 66.83 per cent. This relatively moderate utilization reflects the early phase of MOU operationalization, when institutional processes for fund absorption were still being calibrated.

In 2021-22, the allocation grew to ₹5,03,31,000, and the Department absorbed ₹3,65,07,249 — an improvement in absolute terms, though the utilization rate (approximately 72.54%) underscores the scope for enhanced project execution speed during this transitional period.

The year 2022-23 witnessed a transformative surge in Central support, with FSSAI releasing ₹30,69,26,000 — a nearly six-fold increase over the previous year. This exceptional inflow reflected the Department's expanded MOU scope and its demonstrated capacity to undertake larger programmatic assignments. Utilization of ₹24,68,55,697 (approximately 80.43%) in this year was a significant achievement considering the scale and complexity of activities funded.

In 2023-24, the release was ₹20,29,44,880 with ₹15,43,41,091 utilized. The utilization rate of approximately 76.05 per cent is noteworthy, given that this year involved several infrastructure-linked activities — notably laboratory equipment procurement — where delivery and commissioning timelines are inherently longer. The Department ensured that unspent balances did not lapse, carrying forward eligible activities with proper documentation.

For 2024-25, the highest-ever release of ₹33,85,51,000 was sanctioned under the MOU, reflecting FSSAI's strong confidence in Kerala's Food Safety Department. As on the date of reporting, ₹15,09,20,781 has been utilized, with the second tranche released as recently as 11 February 2026. Expenditure under the second tranche is currently in progress, and final utilization figures will be reported upon year-end closure.

5.5 Consolidated Financial Overview and Highlights

The table below consolidates the total fund flows and aggregate utilization across all three funding streams for the five-year review period, providing a bird's-eye view of the Department's financial performance.

Table 5.4 — Consolidated Financial Summary (All Fund Categories, 2021-22 to 2025-26)

Fund Category	Total Released (5 Yrs)	Total Utilized (5 Yrs)	Average Utilization %
State Plan Funds	₹54.87 Cr	₹39.57 Cr	72.12% (avg)
State Non-Plan Funds	₹234.62 Cr	₹216.05 Cr	92.12% (avg)
Central MOU Funds	₹93.31 Cr	₹61.15 Cr	65.54% (avg)

Note: Figures are rounded for summary purposes. Non-Plan figures converted to Crores from Lakh values. MOU figures converted from absolute Rupees to Crores for comparison.

5.5.1 Key Financial Highlights

- Non-Plan expenditure consistently forms the dominant share of the Department's total annual spend, underscoring the personnel-intensive nature of food safety regulation in a large and geographically diverse State like Kerala.
- The State Plan Fund utilization peaked at 84.40% in 2022-23 and dipped sharply to 47.84% in 2023-24 due to delayed releases from the Finance Department. Corrective action in subsequent years has partially restored the utilization trend.
- MOU Fund receipts have grown more than nine-fold between 2020-21 and 2024-25 — from ₹3.43 Crore to ₹33.86 Crore — reflecting a deepening partnership between FSSAI and the State Government and Kerala's growing absorptive capacity.

- The Department achieved a perfect 100% Non-Plan utilization in 2021-22, demonstrating exemplary establishment fund management and leaving no lapse of committed expenditure.
- Across all years and all fund categories, no significant instances of financial irregularity or audit objection resulting in fund diversion have been reported, maintaining the Department's clean financial track record.
- The rise in total outlay across Non-Plan from ₹4,823.72 Lakhs in 2021-22 to ₹5,003.89 Lakhs in 2025-26 reflects steady growth in departmental staffing strength and corresponding salary commitments.
- For 2024-25, the release of the 2nd MOU tranche as late as 11 February 2026 is a unique operational situation that will require robust expenditure execution in a compressed timeframe to ensure high utilization rates when the final accounts are drawn.

5.6 Way Forward

Translating budgetary provisions into ground-level impact is not without its challenges. The Department has navigated several recurring and emergent obstacles in financial management over the review period. The Department intends to adopt a range of financial management improvements to sustain and enhance its utilization performance going forward. A phased Annual Procurement Plan, aligned with fund release schedules and approved at the start of each financial year, will help frontload procurement activities and reduce year-end bunching. Strengthening the internal financial monitoring mechanism — through monthly expenditure reviews at the departmental level — will enable early identification of potential shortfalls and proactive corrective action.

With respect to MOU funds, the Department proposes to maintain a rolling Utilization Certificate submission calendar, ensuring that FSSAI-mandated reporting timelines are consistently met so as to unlock subsequent tranches without delay. The appointment of dedicated MOU Fund Managers at the State level, with clear accountability for deliverables and financial reporting, is also under consideration.

On the establishment side, expediting the filling of sanctioned vacancies — particularly through Kerala Public Service Commission processes — remains a priority, as fully staffed district offices are the most direct levers for improving Non-Plan utilization and service delivery simultaneously.

5.7 Conclusion

Over the five-year period from 2021-22 to 2025-26, the Food Safety Department of Kerala has demonstrated a sustained commitment to financial discipline and responsible resource stewardship across all three funding streams. Non-Plan expenditure, which constitutes the largest share of the Department's financial obligations, has been managed with consistently high utilization rates — touching 100 per cent in 2021-22 and maintaining above-90 per cent performance in most years. Plan Fund utilization, while subject to the ebb and flow of release timelines and procurement cycles, has shown a recovery trajectory after the dip witnessed in 2023-24.

The most notable financial story of this period is perhaps the exponential growth in FSSAI's MOU funding to the State — from ₹3.43 Crore in 2020-21 to ₹33.86 Crore in 2024-25 — a near tenfold increase that speaks volumes about Kerala's credibility as a high-performing food safety jurisdiction. Sustaining this trust, and matching it with commensurate expenditure performance and programmatic outcomes, will be central to the Department's financial agenda in the years ahead.

The data presented in this chapter reaffirms the Food Safety Department's position as a fiscally responsible and outcome-oriented public institution, one that continues to invest its budgetary resources in the most consequential priority — protecting the health and well-being of the people of Kerala through safe food.