

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.141
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 27TH JULY, 2018
USE OF FORMALIN IN FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS**

***141. SHRI ANTO ANTONY:**

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken note of the reports from various parts of the country that toxic preservatives such as formalin are being used in fish and fishery products in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the action taken by the Government to prevent the use of formalin and other toxic preservatives in fish and fishery products;

(c) whether the use of formalin in food products can cause cancer and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether the Government proposes to make available low cost detectors for use of public to determine traces of such harmful toxins in fish and other consumables and if so, the details thereof

**ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA)**

(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 141* FOR 27TH JULY, 2018**

(a)& (b):- Reports of use of formalin in fish and fishery products in the country has come to the notice of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The enforcement of FSS Act, 2006, rules, regulations made thereunder primarily rests with States/UTs. The Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006 does not permit the use of formaldehyde or formalin in any form, including as preservative and/or additive, in any food products. Generally, formaldehyde is naturally present in marine fishes (like mackerel, Bombay duck etc.) and shellfishes (shrimps and brackish water prawns) and it is very minimal (<4 mg per kg) or absent in freshwater fish. Any freshwater fish testing positive, either through the rapid test or through laboratory analysis, indicates added formalin. However, occurrence of formalin in freshwater fish amounts to illegal use of prohibited substance that affects the safety of consumer and, is liable to be prosecuted.

FSSAI, in consultation with Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Kochi, has prepared a guidance document and issued it to all the States. It has also been placed on FSSAI's website for the benefit of general public as well. To ensure the availability of safe and wholesome food, regular surveillance, monitoring, inspection and random sampling of food products, are undertaken by the officials of Food Safety Departments of the respective States/ UTs to check that they comply with the standards laid down under the FSS Act and rules, regulations made thereunder. In cases where the food samples are found to be non-conforming, recourse is taken to penal provisions under Chapter IX of the FSS Act, 2006. As per the report received from the States/UTs so far, the number of samples of fish lifted and found non-conforming is as under :

No. of fish market inspected	No. of fish samples lifted	No. of sampled found conforming	No. of samples found non-conforming
386	608	533	75*
* indicates non-conforming samples. Out of 75 non-conforming samples - 58 reported from Nagaland, 1 from Assam, 12 from Meghalaya, 3 from Kerala and 1 from Punjab			

(c). The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of WHO classifies formaldehyde as "carcinogenic to humans", with sufficient evidence for causing nasopharyngeal cancer in humans with occupational exposure. However, WHO has indicated that formaldehyde was not carcinogenic through ingestion route. There are, however, other side effects. While ingestion of a small amount of formaldehyde is unlikely to cause acute effect, but ingestion of a large amount of formaldehyde can generally cause severe abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury and possible death.

(d). Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), on the advice of FSSAI, has developed a rapid detection kit 'CIFTTest Kit' that can be used to determine the presence of formalin on fish. The rapid kit is paper strip based which qualitatively determines the presence of formaldehyde within 2 minutes. The paper strip has to be swabbed over the surface of fish 3-4 times in different areas followed by addition of one drop of reagent. Colour developed within 1-2 minutes is compared with standard chart provided. CIFT has provided these testing kits to 28 agencies including FSSAI.
