

DBT to promote biotech tools to ensure safe food

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The need for a wholesome, quality, pathogenic free stable food is critical in food security. As food safety issues are gaining importance, there is a need to provide greater assurance about the safety and quality of foods.

Taking this into account, public health, food and nutrition division of the department of biotechnology (DBT), ministry of science and technology, government of India, has asked for research and development proposals in the various identified thrust areas. These include the development of diagnostic tests for detection of food borne pathogens/toxins/toxic agents. The idea is to develop sensitive, newer, cost effective and simple methodologies/tests/kits to quantify the potential toxic agents in food, feed and water e.g., food contaminants, microbial pathogens including mycotoxins, adulterants and newer food additives. Apart from that the toxicological evaluation and risk assessment and management: Toxicity/allergenicity/safety data for biological/chemical contaminants, adulterants and traditionally used herbs as food additives.

Proposals may be submitted by scientists/ interdisciplinary groups working in recognised R & D Institutions. The screening of proposals will be undertaken by constituted expert committee for consideration of financial support by DBT. Last Date of submission of proposals has been kept as October 31, 2013.

The food with its nutrients, apart from being consumed by human, could also act as a medium for the growth of spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms. A number of factors contribute to food being unsafe and causing foodborne illness. e.g. Intrinsic factors inherent to the food (e.g., pH, water activity and nutrients) and extrinsic factors external to it (e.g., temperature, gaseous environment and competitive microflora).