

Impact Assessment Report

March 2024



Prepared by,

SGS

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Abbreviations

FICSI - Food Industry Capacity and Skills Initiative
 FoSTaC - Food Safety Training and Certification
 FSSAI - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
 GMP - Good Management Practices
 GHP - Good Hygiene Practices
 SIP - Skill India Portal
 ToT - Training of Trainers



Acknowledgement

We, SGS, would like to express our gratitude towards Food Industry Capacity and Skills Initiative (FICSI) for entrusting us with this impact assessment assignment. We are extremely thankful for their assistance during the course of the study.

We thank everyone who participated in the study and contributed to gathering insights.

We truly appreciate all the intellectual guidance from FICSI and Implementation Partner's team throughout the study. Last but not least, we want to express our gratitude to everyone who spent the time answering the extensive survey.





Ethical Considerations

Informed consent:

The interviews were done after the respondents gave their consent. Even after the interviews were completed, their permission was sought to proceed with their responses.

Confidentiality:

The information provided by participants has been kept private. At no point were their data or identities disclosed. The research findings have been quoted in a way that does not expose the respondents' identities.

Comfort:

The interviews were performed following the respondents' preferences. In addition, the interview time was chosen in consultation with them. At each level, respondents' convenience and comfort were considered.

Right to reject or withdraw:

Respondents were guaranteed safety and allowed to refuse to answer questions or withdraw during the study.



Introduction

In the realm of economic opportunities, the Food Processing sector emerges as a promising avenue in India, brimming with entrepreneurial potential, particularly for small-scale food handlers. Women play a pivotal role in steering small food businesses in India. Although their drive to succeed as entrepreneurs is undeniable, they need significant assistance and empowerment efforts to strengthen their businesses. This assistance covers a wide range of important areas, including applicable legal compliances (FSSAI Registration/License, etc.), starting and promoting their own business, building brands and developing marketing strategies.

Small-scale food handlers often operate without proper infrastructure such as hygienic processing facilities, storage, and transportation facilities. This not only affects the quality and safety of their products but also limits their market reach. Women working in the informal food sector frequently face constraints in obtaining necessary certifications, financial resources, training, and education. These limitations hinder their capacity to invest in their businesses, grow their operations, and enhance productivity.

Acknowledging the significant potential in the Food Processing industry, ITC Foods Limited supported a project as part of its CSR initiative. This project aims to enhance the skills of 35,000 female food handlers in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Haryana. The goal is to empower these women by improving their vocational abilities and ultimately enhancing their livelihoods within the food processing sector.

This program serves as a platform to empower women food handlers through training and FoSTaC certification, equipping them with essential skills in food safety practices, hygiene standards, and regulatory compliance. It aims to fill knowledge gaps, boosting professional growth and confidence in handling food responsibly. By addressing these gaps and enhancing their capabilities, the initiative plays a vital role in upholding food safety standards and empowering women within the food industry.



About FICSI

The Food Industry Capacity & Skill Initiative (FICSI), also recognized as the Food Processing Sector Skill Council, is a nonprofit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. This initiative has garnered support from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). The organization's headquarters is situated at the third floor of the Shriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra Building, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi 110001.

FICSI operates as an autonomous entity within the industry, with the primary objective of cultivating a skilled workforce tailored for the Food Processing Industries. Its role extends to fostering a culture of food-related knowledge and enhancing the skills of individuals engaged in the food processing sector. Notably, FICSI is registered under the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) as an Awarding Agency





Executive Summary

The project “Ashirwad - Raho 4 Kadam Age” has proven to be successful in equipping women food handlers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to succeed in the food processing sector. The project has helped in improving awareness on regulatory compliance for the food industry by providing dual certification i.e. FoSTaC and Skill India. By addressing key areas such as food safety, Good Hygiene Practice (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and entrepreneurship, the program contributes to building a more resilient and empowered workforce capable of driving economic growth and innovation. It is recommended to extend the training and dual certification support to more food handlers in the targeted locations. This will play a crucial role in scaling up efforts to ensure food safety and cultivate a culture of regulatory compliance.

Key Findings:

- 80% of trainees found the training content highly relevant and beneficial, indicating its effectiveness in addressing their needs and interests.
- A significant majority (59%) reported a substantial improvement in their understanding of food safety and hygiene, highlighting the impact of the training on knowledge enhancement and skill development.
- 38% of trainees experienced a substantial improvement in their comprehension of Good Manufacturing Practices, underscoring the program's success in promoting industry best practices and standards.
- A notable majority (76%) expressed their intention to start their own businesses within the next six months, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.
- 87% of respondents expressed feeling more self-confident as women to earn and grow professionally, indicating the program's positive impact on gender empowerment and self-esteem.
- 82% of trainees expressed confidence in independently applying for government schemes, reflecting their increased awareness and capacity to access available resources and support. 35% of the women food handlers came to know about FSSAI registration and its significance post this intervention.

SDG Alignment

SDG 1: No Poverty

By equipping food handlers with the necessary skills and entrepreneurship training, the project aims to reduce poverty by enhancing their income-generating opportunities and economic empowerment.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The project specifically targets women food handlers, promoting gender equality by providing them with access to education, training, and economic opportunities in the food processing sector.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

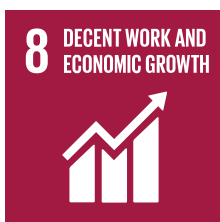
Through skill enhancement and entrepreneurship development, the project aims to create decent work opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and promote sustainable livelihoods in the food processing industry.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

By promoting food safety, hygiene practices, and sustainable food processing techniques, the project contributes to responsible consumption and production patterns, ensuring the availability of safe and nutritious food.

SDG 17: Partnership for Goals

Collaboration with industry stakeholders, and training providers is essential for the successful implementation of the project and achieving the SDGs. By effectively collaborating with stakeholders, the project contributes to SDG 17.



About the Intervention

Key Objectives



To **upskill**
women engaged
in Food
Processing Sector



To **confer Dual**
Certifications i.e
FoSTaC and Skill
India among
women food
handlers

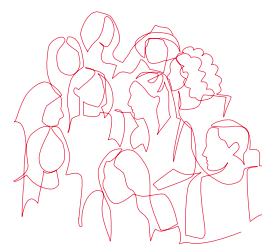


To **disseminate**
knowledge about
Good
Manufacturing
Practices and
Good Hygiene
Practices



To **promote**
entrepreneurship,
local employment
and better income to
curb migration

Project Locations

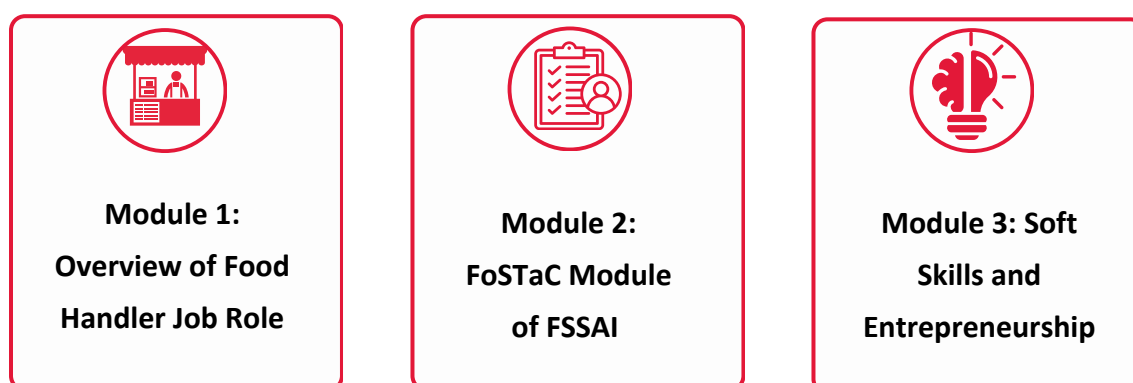


Target Beneficiaries: 35,000
women food handlers

About the Intervention

FICSI through its network of affiliated Training Providers implemented the program in the target states i.e Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The program aims to upskill beneficiaries from various districts within these states. Certified trainers from FSSAI and FICSI conducted training sessions in the designated states for the FoSTaC Basic Course and Food Product Handler courses, respectively. The beneficiaries of the program underwent an assessment process and were awarded dual certifications for both FoSTaC (Food Safety Training and Certification) and Skill India. This dual certification ensured that each participant was enrolled in both the FoSTaC and Skill India Portals. The overarching goal of this dual certification was to equip the beneficiaries with a thorough understanding of appropriate food safety measures, covering areas such as proper food handling, storage, hygiene practices, regulatory compliance, and entrepreneurship skills.

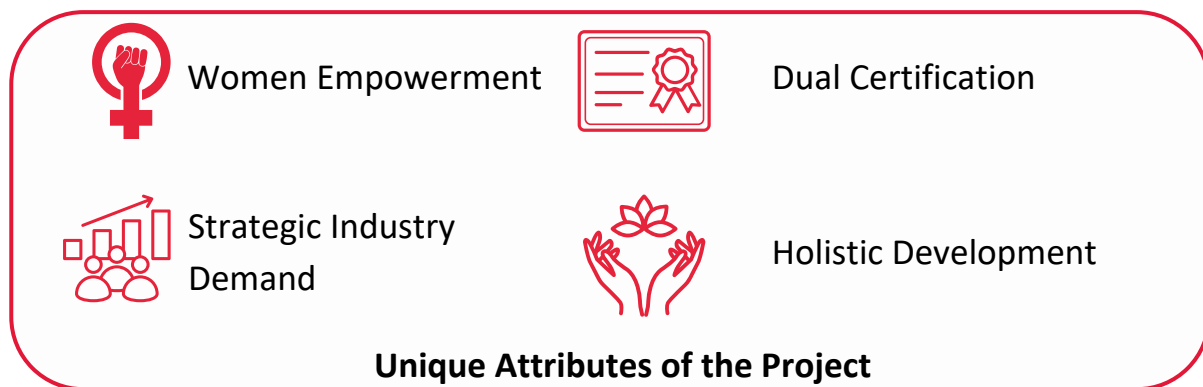
Participants underwent a one-day training program on both the FoSTaC and Skill India modules of 8 hours duration. Training modules covered under this program are as below.



In addition to honing expertise in their respective fields, the program incorporates guidance on entrepreneurial aspects, providing participants with the essential tools and skills needed to initiate their own food enterprises. The soft skills and entrepreneurship module intends to sensitize beneficiaries on entrepreneurship, legal, marketing and financial aspects of businesses.

About the Intervention

The FoSTaC module focuses on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), also educating participants about FSSAI Registration and Licensing prerequisites for food-related businesses.



The trainers delivering these training sessions were chosen from a group of trainers who held dual certification for both the FoSTaC and Skill India training programs. Additionally, FICSI facilitated two FoSTaC ToT programs in partnership with FSSAI and two Skill India ToT programs as well. The training was delivered in Hindi, which is the local language in all chosen states. Following the training, all participants were provided with a participant handbook for the FoSTaC course in Hindi.



Fig.1: Picture of participants undergoing training

Study Design and Methodology

The chapter describes the process adopted and the methodology used to assess the overall impact of the intervention undertaken by FICSI.

The impact assessment study utilized a combination of data collection methods, including participatory assessment tools, to gather all necessary information for a comprehensive analysis of the impact. SGS approached the study with the aim of providing insights to help FICSI assess the project's overall impact, comprehend stakeholder perspectives, and develop strategies for future implementation.

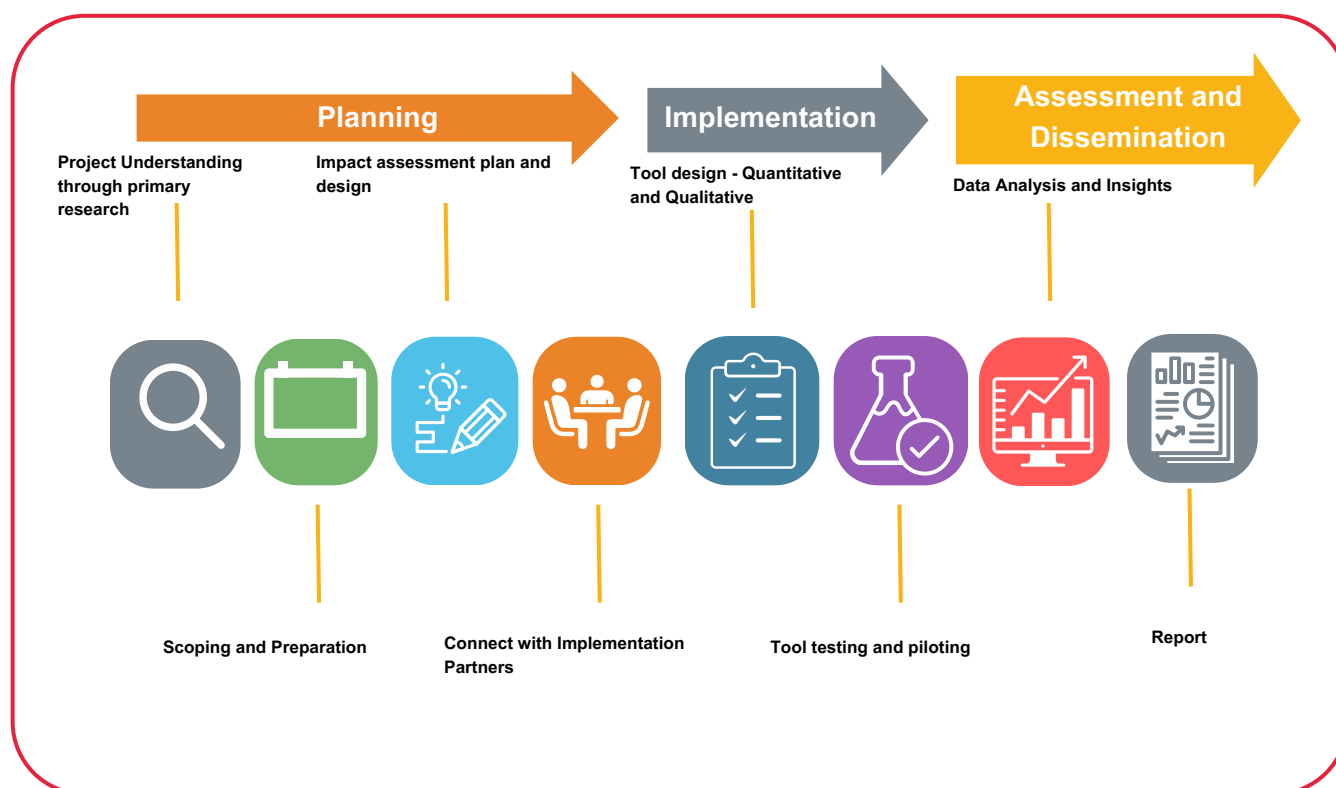


Fig.2: Impact Assessment Approach

Study Design and Methodology

SGS deployed a two-pronged approach for the impact assessment of the project. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods and an in-depth desk review of secondary data. In order to understand the program holistically, structured questionnaires were prepared for stakeholders.

A combination of research and consultative approach was adopted to address the scope of work under the assessment study.

To gauge the project's effectiveness, we engaged with 391 beneficiaries. Location wise respondents are illustrated below.

Table 1: Locationwise Beneficiaries Consulted

State	District	Number of Beneficiaries Consulted
Haryana	Panchkula	62
Uttarakhand	Haridwar	34
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	201
	Meerut	43
	Raebareli	51

Findings and Analysis

The project emphasizes on women working as food handler. Hence, 391 women were consulted who were trained and certified through this program. It is evident that the project has primarily trained individuals with a basic level of schooling. Additionally, 29% of the women have not undergone formal schooling at all. The data indicates that nearly half (49%) of the trained individuals are self-employed, while 31% are employed in traditional jobs.

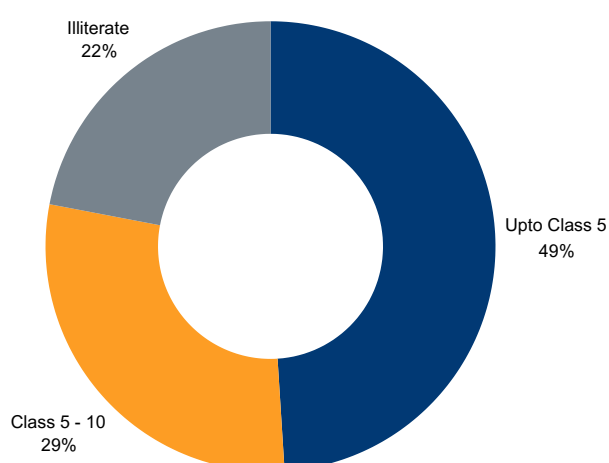


Fig 3: Education Profile

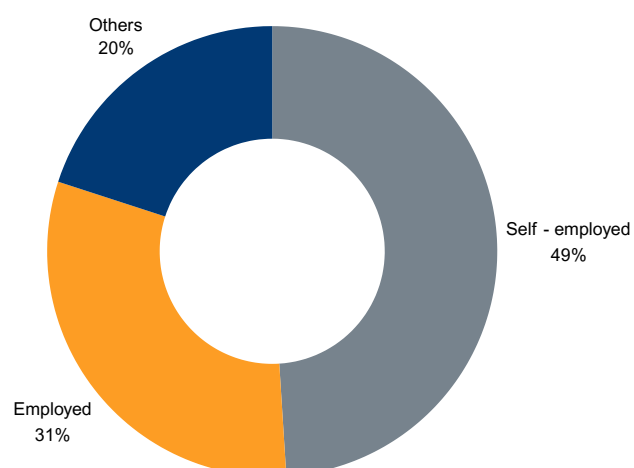


Fig 4: Type of Employment

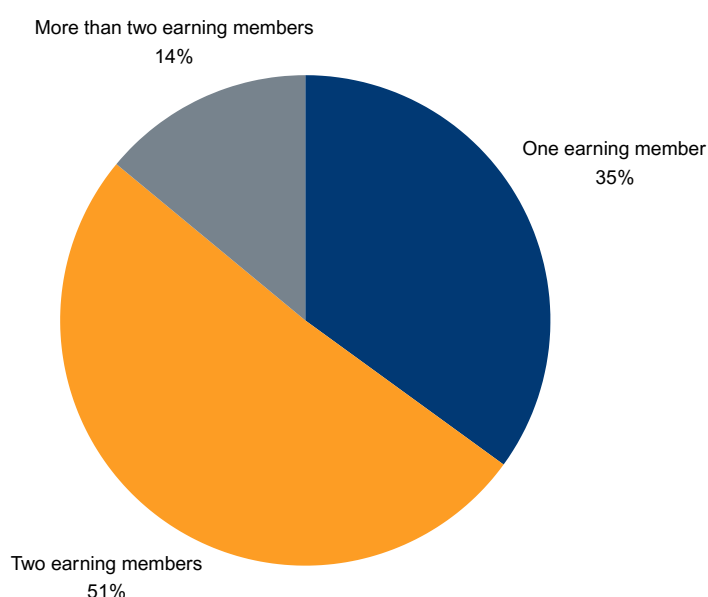
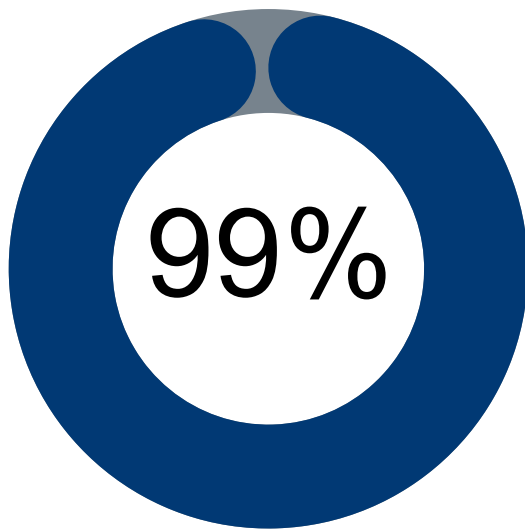


Fig 5: Number of Earning Members in the Family

Findings and Analysis



99% of the participants reported completing the training conducted by the implementation partner in their respective locations.

Fig 6: Completion of Training

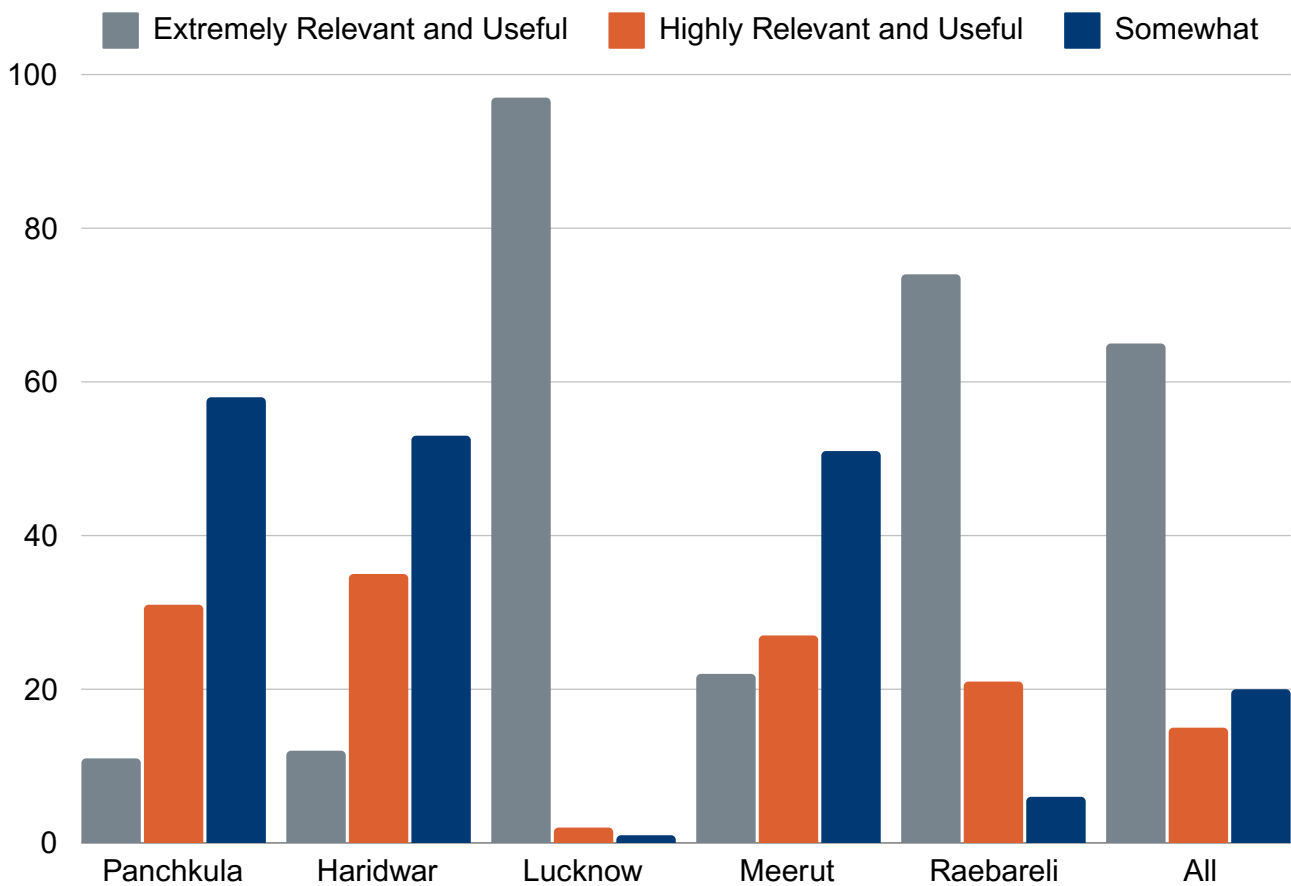


Fig 7: Content Usefulness

Findings and Analysis

Basis Fig.6, it is evident that 80% of the trainees perceived the training content to be highly relevant and beneficial, while 20% found it to be moderately relevant and beneficial. Furthermore, it is apparent that satisfaction with the training content was the highest in Lucknow (99%) and the lowest in Panchkula (42%). It is evident that an overwhelming majority of the trainees, accounting for 89%, perceived the language used as Easy to Understand, with 9% considering it Somewhat Easy.

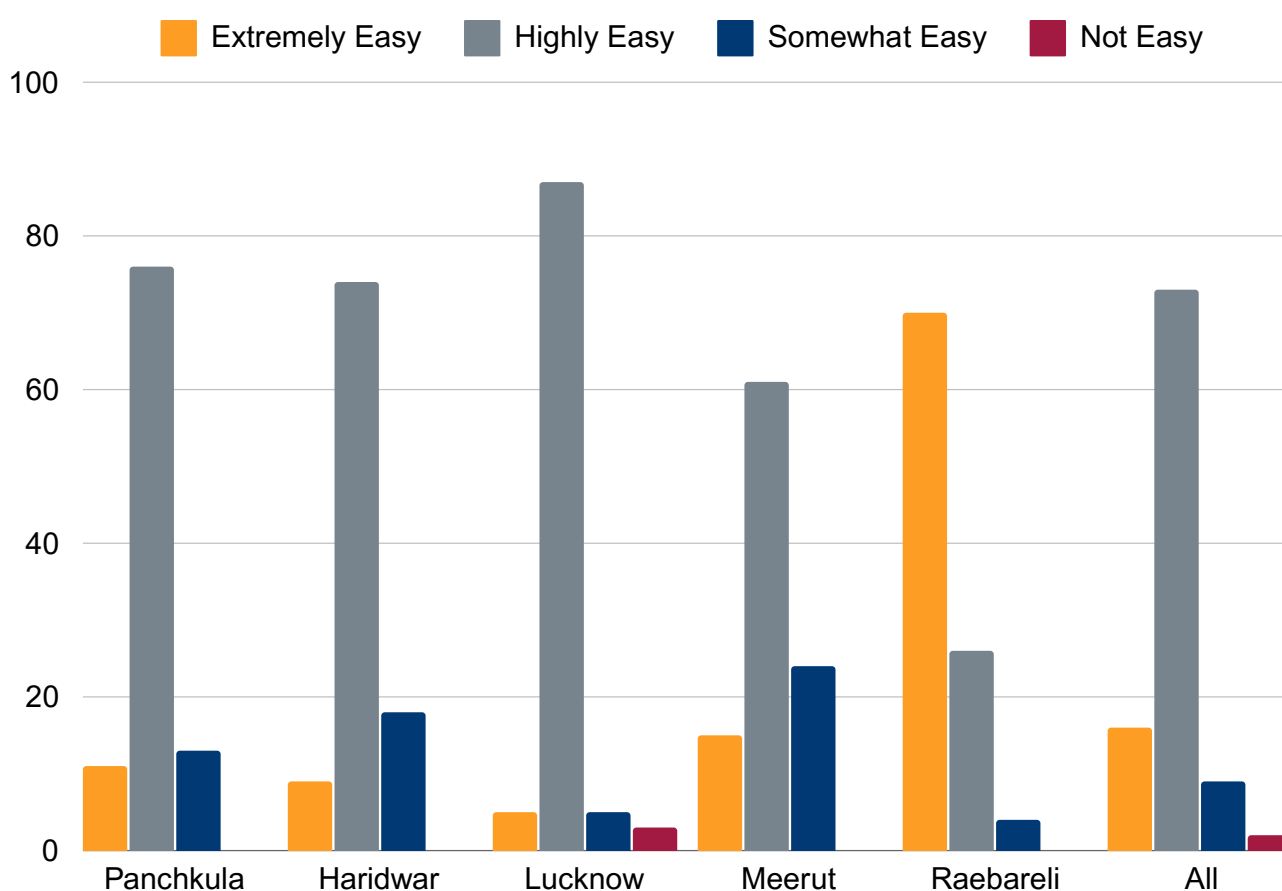


Fig 8: Language Understanding

Findings and Analysis

The data clearly indicates that a significant majority of trainees (59%) reported a substantial improvement in their understanding of food safety and hygiene, while 37% noted a moderate improvement. This can be attributed to factors such as the quality of instruction, the relevance of course materials, and the engagement of trainers as highlighted by beneficiaries during discussions and further investigation.

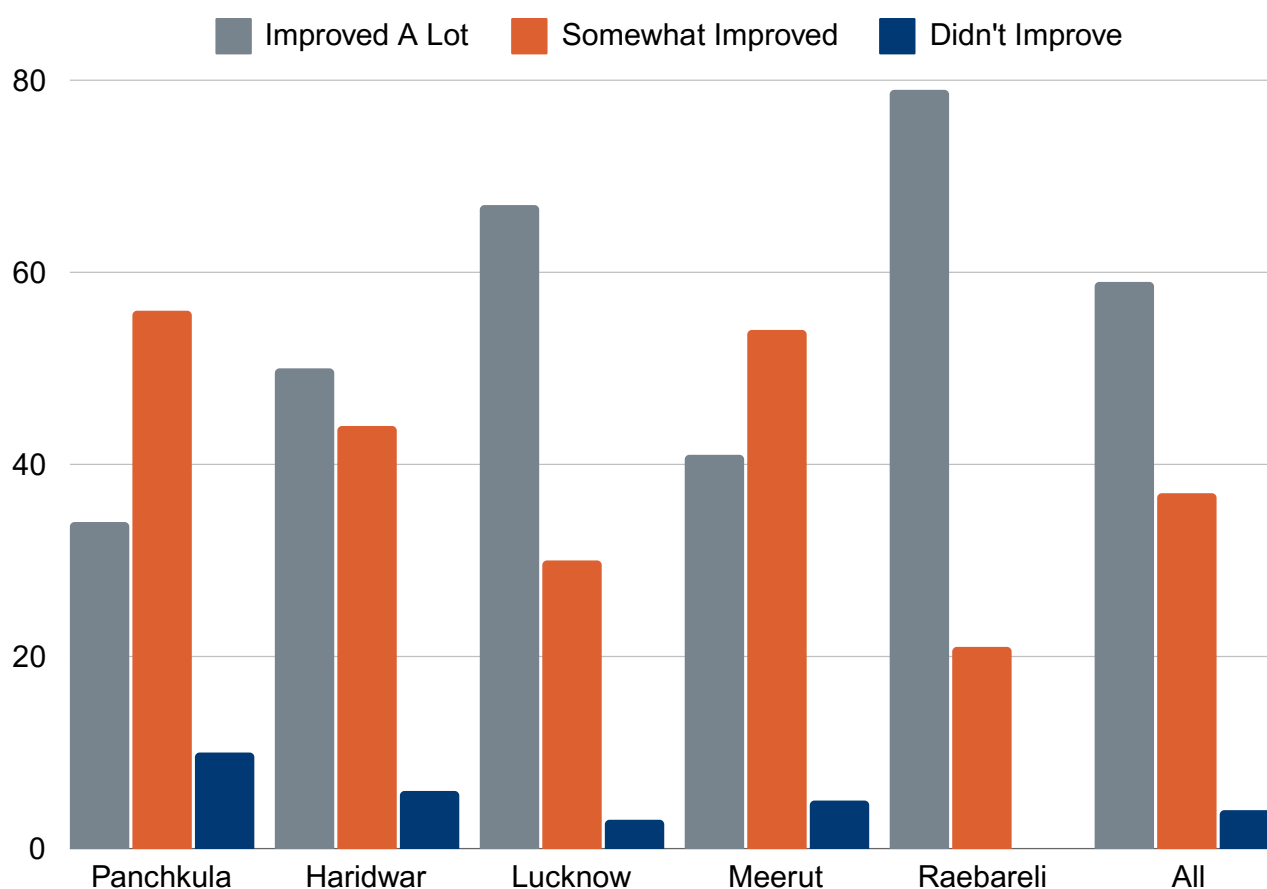


Fig 9: Understanding on Food Safety and Hygiene

Findings and Analysis

Over a third (38%) of the trainees experienced a substantial improvement in their comprehension of Good Manufacturing Practices, while a notable majority (60%) perceived a moderate improvement. They reported adopting practices such as frequent washing of raw food items, including vegetables, regular hand and utensil washing, utilization of fresh raw ingredients, and adhering to hygiene measures such as wearing hair caps, clean attire, and tying up hair while cooking and handling food. Adhering to high standards of food safety and hygiene could instill confidence in consumers.

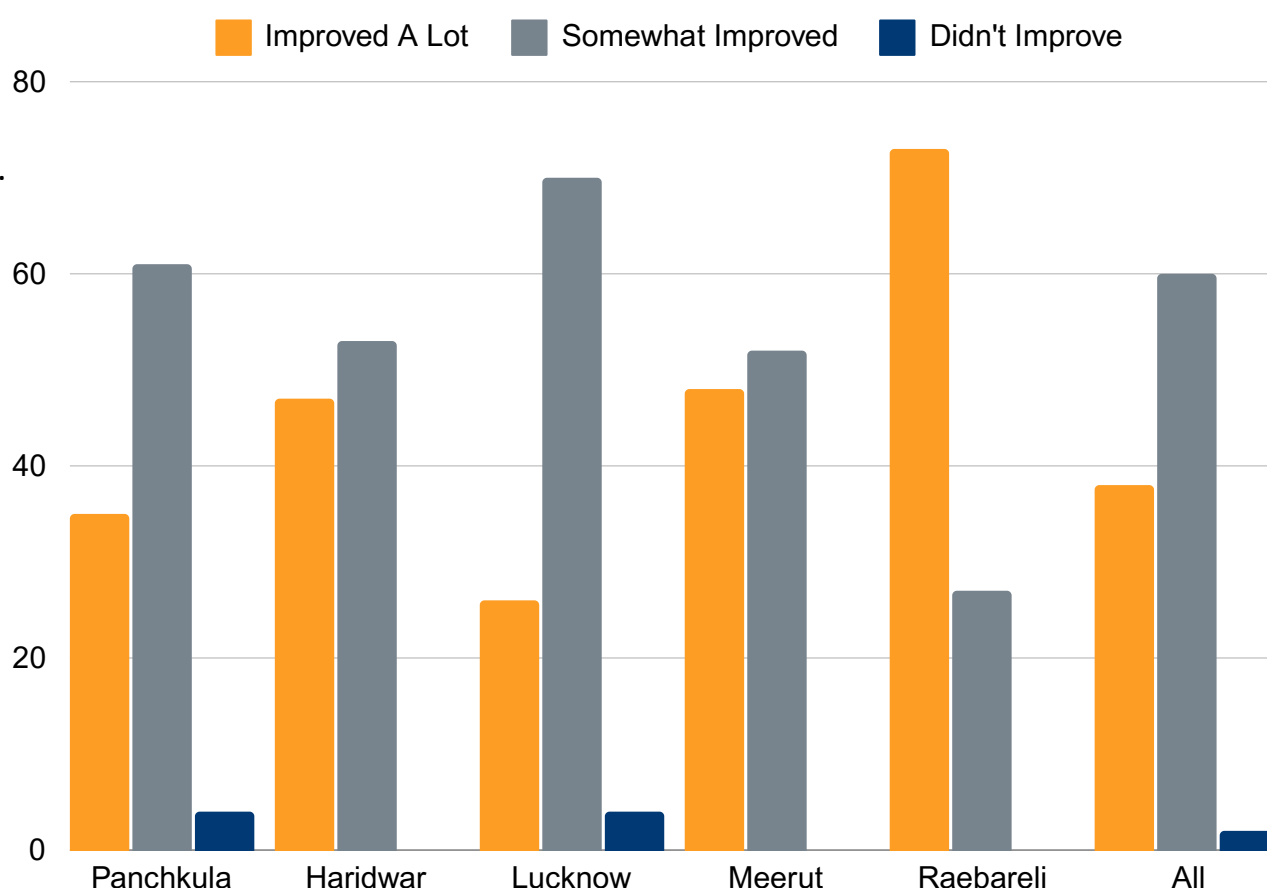


Fig 10: Understanding on Good Manufacturing Process

Findings and Analysis

It was encouraging to observe that a vast majority of respondents (81%) expressed confidence in their ability to initiate and expand their own businesses. A substantial majority of the participants (76%) indicated their intention to commence their own businesses within the next six months. .

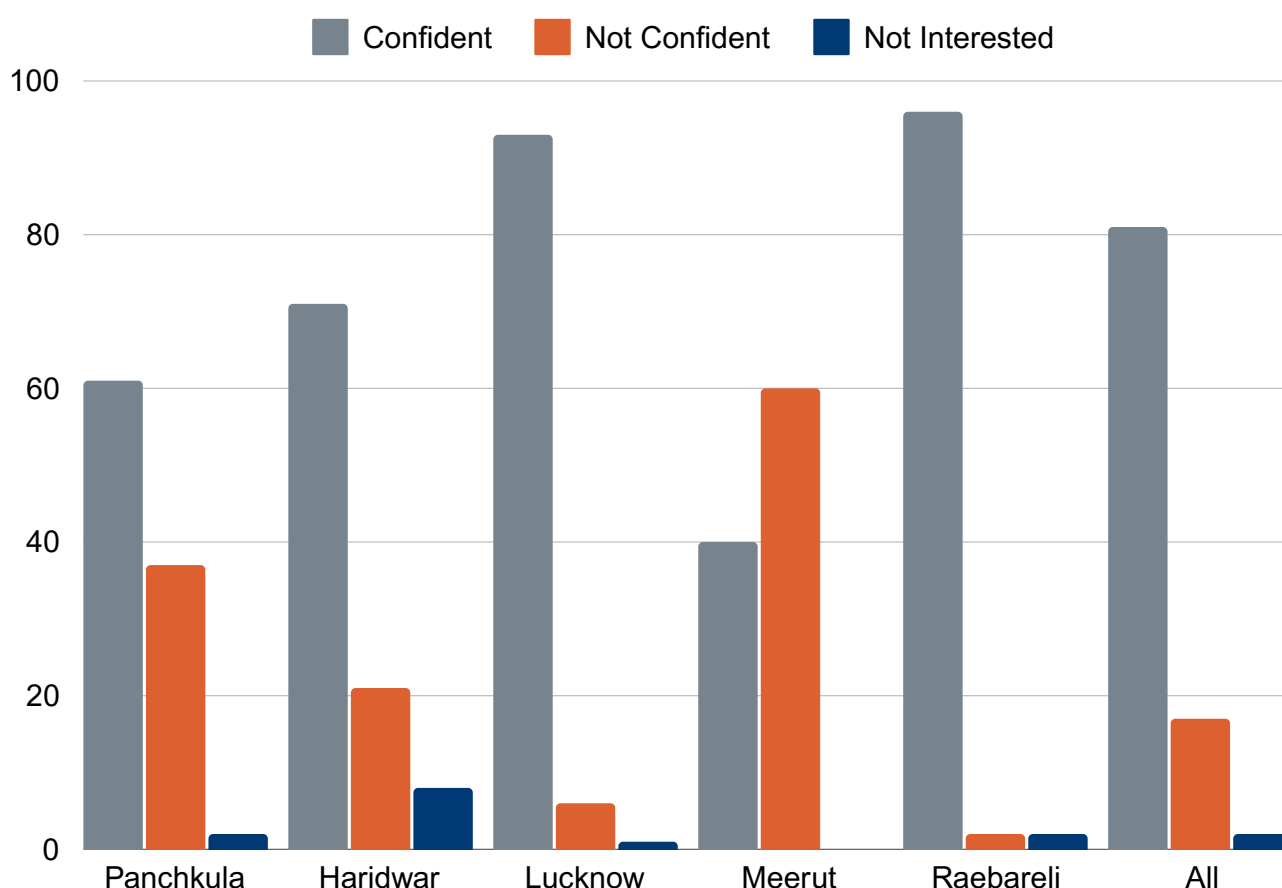


Fig 11: Confident to open and grow business

Findings and Analysis

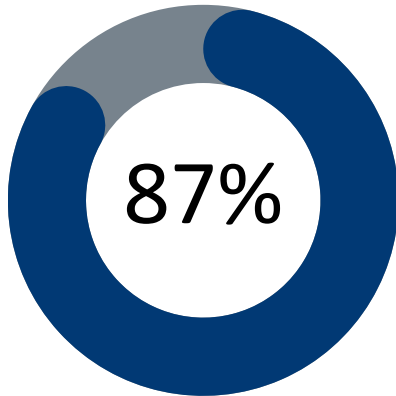


Fig 12: Enhanced Self-confidence

One of the most encouraging findings from the study is that 87% of respondents expressed feeling more self-confident as women to earn and grow professionally. This statistic underscores the effectiveness of the program in empowering women and fostering a conducive environment for their personal and professional development.

The significance of this finding cannot be overstated. Enhanced self-confidence among women not only contributes to their individual growth but also catalyzes broader societal progress by promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the workforce.

One significant outcome of the training was that 80% of the participants now feel confident in conducting digital transactions. However, in Panchkula, the results were less favorable, as 71% of the trainees expressed discomfort in performing digital transactions. The participants indicated that they primarily favored using Paytm (49%), followed by NEFT (43%), PhonePe (34%), and Google Pay (31%). This suggests that a range of applications is utilized for conducting digital transactions.

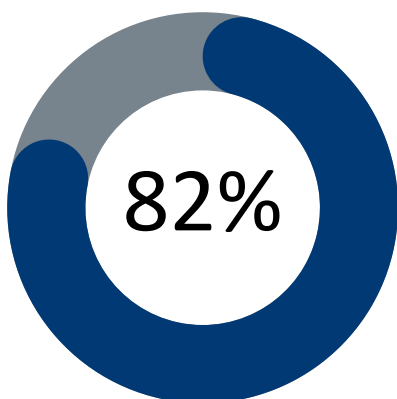


Fig 13: Confident in independently applying for government schemes

Majority of the respondents (82%) expressed confidence in independently applying for government schemes.

Findings and Analysis

About 99% of the trainees recognized that they would receive FoSTaC and Skill India certificates after completion of training. Participants acknowledged that the training has helped them in becoming well-versed with food safety regulations and compliance standards set by FSSAI. Participants also affirmed that this has helped gain confidence in their abilities to handle food safely and maintain hygiene standards. It is surprising to note that about 35% of the participants came to know about FSSAI despite being associated with the food processing industry.

Awareness level among trainees regarding certificate issuance suggests effective communication methods used by training organizers. It demonstrates a proactive effort to inform trainees about the advantages and procedures related to their training programs. Such heightened awareness can boost trainee involvement and enthusiasm during the training period, as the expectation of receiving a certificate serves as a concrete acknowledgment of their hard work.

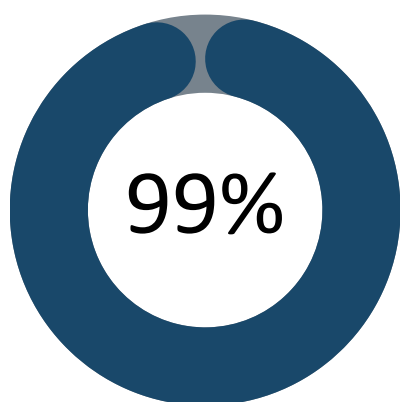


Fig 14: Aware about dual certification i.e Skill India and FoSTaC

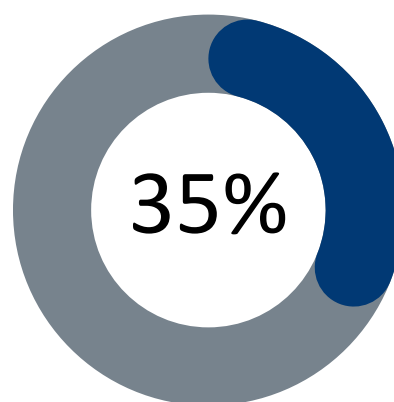


Fig 15: Came to know about FSSAI Registration post training

Findings and Analysis

The trainees expressed a need for additional training and assistance to launch, expand, and enhance their food businesses. They sought support primarily for branding, marketing, and advertising (52%), followed by mentoring or guidance (46%), assistance in accessing government schemes (26%), facilitation in obtaining bank loans (22%), and information about the market (14%). This indicates a strong desire among the trainees to establish and develop their own enterprises.

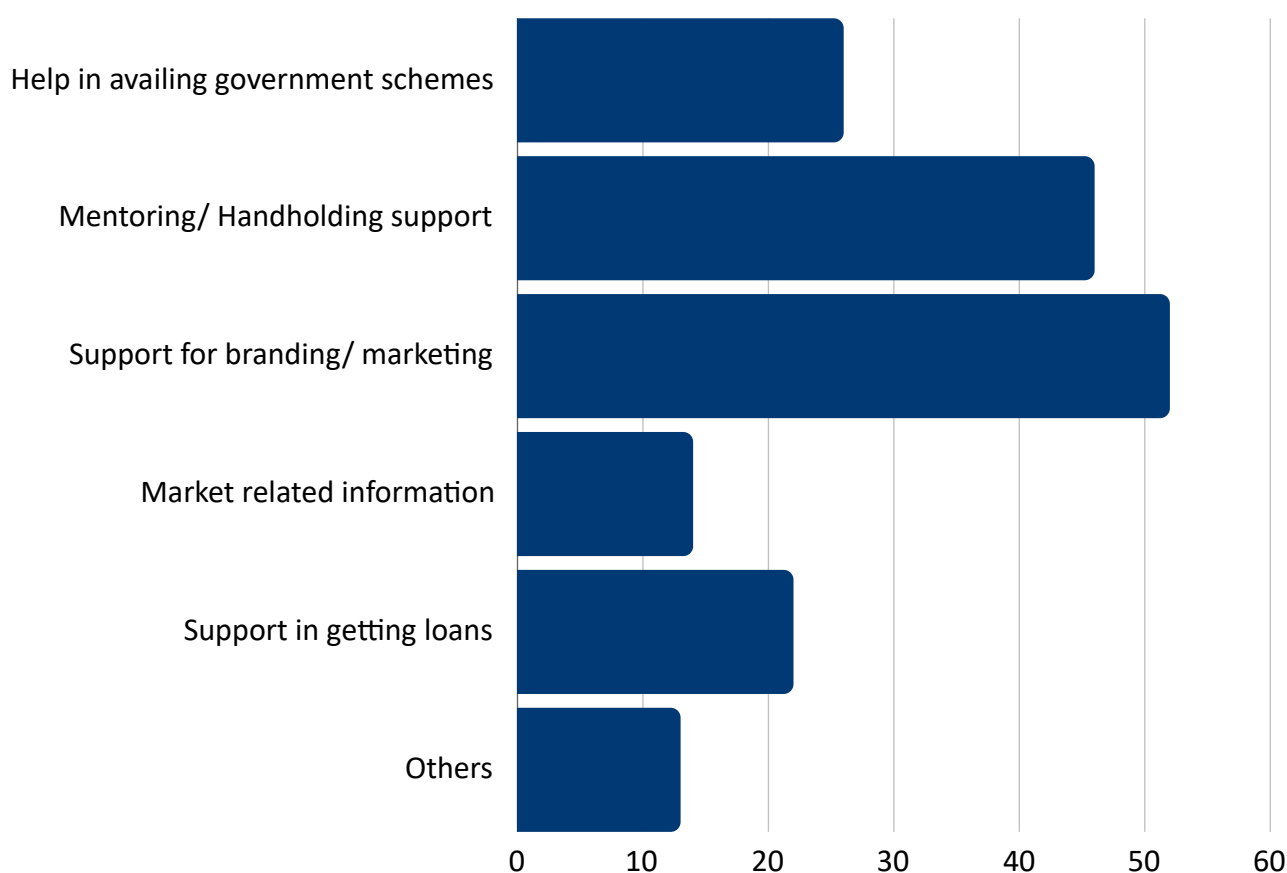


Fig 16: Further Support Required

Findings and Analysis

Approximately 49% of the participants expressed an interest in interactive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials. A significant number of those surveyed had limited reading abilities due to lower education levels. Therefore, offering IEC materials can act as a handy reference guide for them. 61% of trainees expressed their wish to receive Personal Protective Equipment after completing the training sessions, highlighting their significant emphasis on safety precautions.

A notable portion of respondents, accounting for 22%, expressed interest in incorporating Personality Development sessions into their training curriculum. This underscores the recognition of holistic development and the acknowledgment of the role of soft skills in professional growth.

The overwhelming majority of trainees, constituting approximately 98%, expressed favorable opinions regarding the course curriculum. The positive reception of the curriculum is a significant indicator of its quality and alignment with the project's goals.

The feedback received from the trainees suggests a high level of satisfaction with the content, structure, and delivery of the course material. The positive sentiments expressed by the participants underscore the efficacy of the curriculum in meeting their educational needs and expectations.

46% of trainees rated the trainers' performance as "Excellent." 24% and 29% of respondents rated trainers' performance as "Very Good," and "Good" respectively. This distribution of ratings indicates a highly positive perception of the trainers' performance among the trainees.



Findings and Analysis

42% of participants rated the Course Material as 'Excellent', indicating a significant degree of satisfaction and effectiveness. Additionally, 28% of respondents rated the material as 'Very Good', while another 28% rated it as 'Good'. This distribution of ratings underscores a notably positive perception of the equipment and materials utilized throughout the training sessions. It suggests that the materials provided met or exceeded the expectations of the participants, contributing to a conducive learning environment.

Findings and Analysis from FGDs

Major Problems Faced While Processing/Handling Food

The participants mentioned that their primary challenges included issues with long-term food storage, a lack of manpower or labor in the industry, struggles with maintaining food safety standards and managing food waste effectively.

Major Learnings and Use of Learnings

The participants acknowledged that they lacked awareness of essential practices for ensuring food safety and hygiene before the training. During the training, they learned proper food handling and storage techniques, which they now apply in their daily work. They stressed the significance of cleanliness and hygiene, including personal hygiene, kitchen cleanliness, utensil hygiene, packaging materials, and overall premises cleanliness. They also grasped the importance of thoroughly cooking food and washing hands before food handling to prevent illnesses. Furthermore, they understood the significance of practices like keeping nails trimmed and tying back hair.

Plan to Use Learnings to Open Own Food Business

The majority of participants strongly advocated for putting their newly acquired knowledge into practice rather than letting their skills go unused. Many expressed a desire to venture into entrepreneurship, highlighting their ambition to start their businesses. They mentioned gaining invaluable insights from the program, including the importance of choosing suitable business locations, understanding food industry operations, budget planning, and effectively marketing their products or services. However, few of them also emphasized on limited access to financial resources to start business on their own.

Findings and Analysis from FGDs

Need for Good Hygiene Practices and Good Management Practices

The participants mentioned that if the food they prepare lacks hygiene and safety standards, it could lead to customers, particularly children, falling sick. Therefore, they emphasized that by implementing the practices taught during the training, they can improve their food handling, storage, and cooking techniques, resulting in better-tasting and safer food.

Training's Role in Empowering Women

The participants observed that as a result of this training, women in their community have gained greater self-sufficiency, acquiring the skills to manage food processing, cooking, and storage autonomously and efficiently. They have also learned improved techniques, which has enhanced their job satisfaction and earned them more recognition for their work.

Extension of Support

The majority of attendees expressed the view that additional training should be provided to more women in their communities. Furthermore, many suggested that assistance in obtaining necessary licenses for starting their food businesses would be highly beneficial. They also emphasized the need for further training in computer usage and digital empowerment. Additionally, they requested guidebooks and additional Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials. Some participants also highlighted the importance of personality development sessions.



Conclusion and Recommendations

The project serves as a vital bridge in addressing significant gaps in training, upskilling, and capacity building for food handlers, particularly in the areas of safe and hygienic food cooking, processing, storing, and handling. Moreover, it empowers participants by imparting knowledge on how to initiate and expand their own food businesses. Through comprehensive training and education, the project aims to equip food handlers with the necessary skills and resources to ensure the safety and quality of food products while also fostering entrepreneurship and economic empowerment within the community.

For food handlers employed in unorganized food businesses, conducting training sessions focused on licensing requirements and sharing knowledge about food safety and compliance is crucial. These sessions play a vital role in educating local food handlers about the necessary licenses and permits needed to operate legally. Additionally, they provide valuable information on best practices for ensuring food safety, such as proper handling, storage, and hygiene measures. Enhancing awareness and understanding in these areas can significantly reduce the risks associated with unsafe food practices, protect consumer health, and contribute to building a more robust and compliant food industry within the community.

In conclusion, enhanced awareness about critical aspects such as food safety, hygiene practices, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) among food handlers could play a pivotal role in bolstering adherence to industry standards and ensuring consumer safety. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and understanding of these key principles, the project not only enhances the quality and safety of food products but also contributes to building a culture of responsibility and accountability within the food processing sector.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Increase Outreach for all Food Handlers in Target Districts:** The trainings conducted thus far has been successful and may be extended to saturate coverage across all the target districts of the project intervention states. With trained individuals holding FoSTaC certificates, can increase awareness and implementation of food safety standards. This can further result in a safer environment for consumers, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses and ensuring the quality of food products available in the community. Dual certifications can open up new employment opportunities for food handlers. Employers may prefer candidates with specialized training and certifications, leading to better job prospects and economic growth within the community.
- **Facilitation Support for Availing Govt. Schemes/Licenses:** Further facilitation & handholding support is required to ensure the Food Handlers can avail of the Govt. schemes in their respective districts.
- **Basic Training on the Use of Computers:** To make them fully digitally capable so that they can independently search, apply, learn, and grow regarding various aspects of the Food Business, Basic Computer classes may be undertaken with a focus on surfing on Internet.
- **Training on Financial Management** A detailed financial Management course will help the Food Entrepreneurs to systematically budget, spend and manage their revenues and expenditure.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Training on Food Waste Management:** Improper disposal of food waste can lead to hygiene and sanitation issues, attracting pests and causing foul odors. Training will ensure that food handlers understand the correct methods of disposal, such as using designated bins, sealing waste properly, and maintaining cleanliness in food preparation areas. This can also lead to customer satisfaction. Educating food handlers about minimizing food waste will help conserve valuable resources such as water, and energy. Reducing food waste can also lead to significant cost savings for businesses.
- **Access to Digital Content (Online Platforms):** Food handlers can be given access to online platforms containing training modules, courses, and educational materials concerning food safety and hygiene practices. This allows them to conveniently improve their expertise and understanding from any location with internet connectivity.
- **Introduction of Personality Development Sessions:** These sessions may be introduced to help serve as transformative platforms wherein women trainees gain not only practical skills but also confidence and self-assurance to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. In rural settings, where societal norms and economic disparities often limit women's opportunities, these sessions can serve as catalysts for change, breaking through barriers of self-doubt and cultural constraints.
- **Formation of Community Food Monitoring Groups:** This may be setup to regularly conduct quality checks and report back through an established feedback mechanism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Formation of Support Group Encompassing Nearby Govt. officials, NGO groups etc.:** A support group for prospective Food entrepreneurs may be setup so that they get the required support and can be quickly connected to the respective stakeholders.
- **Helpline No. for Support:** A helpline no. may be set up to provide expert guidance to challenges concerning opening and growing their food businesses, regulatory compliances, and obtaining certifications.
- **WhatsApp Groups for Quick Support:** This may be setup to not only create a Support Group to network, liaison and collaborate with fellow food entrepreneurs but also serve as a platform to provide latest docs, guidelines, IEC material and expert advice to them.
- **Design & Development of Interactive IEC Materials & Provision of Guidebooks:** Interactive materials including animated videos, Instructive posters, picture cards etc. can be made to promote quick learning.

Picture Gallery - Training Sessions



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