

Pick packaged water at your own risk

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KOCHI: Whom would you believe when question are being raised about the safety of packaged drinking water - Council for Food Research and Development (CFRD), Konni or the regional analytical laboratory at Kakkanad. The former agency found the presence of [E coli](#) while the latter certified that bottled water manufactured in the district is safe.

Three months ago, the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited CFRD lab tested 16 samples of packaged drinking water and concluded that 90% of the samples tested in the district, including leading brands, are unfit for drinking purpose.

Recently, samples of packaged drinking water were collected from 36 units in the district as per the directive of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). It was done as part of a nation-wide survey to check quality of packaged drinking water sold in the country. In sharp contrast to the previous report, the regional analytical laboratory certified that bottled drinking water manufactured here is safe. The results have raised a question mark over the capability of the regional analytical laboratory to conduct biological tests with many food safety officials expressing doubts over the result. "It is shocking that all results are perfect. It is difficult to believe that all plants have taken corrective measures within three months. It is not known that whether the lab is equipped to conduct biological tests. There are previous instances where the lab had given inaccurate reports," said a senior food safety official.

According to sources within the food safety department, apart from result mismatches, there was also much delay in getting results from the lab. They said that many of the equipment in the lab are not functional. "The facilities need to be upgraded here so that it can conduct tests as per the parameters set by the Food Safety and Standards Act," said another food safety official.

State food safety commissioner Biju Prabhakar said that he is yet to receive the report and will peruse the matter soon as he receives it.