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Title: Issue regarding misuse of Food Safety and Standards Act.

*SHRI P. LINGAM (TENKASI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Food Safety and Standards Act legislated in this House and notified on 5.8.2011 is being misused and that is what I would like to bring to the notice of this august House, and through you, to the Government. It is stated that this is to ensure safety both of food and food materials and to maintain quality and standards. In the name of ensuring standards, there is an attempt to see that small traders are wiped out once and for all. A Committee with 50 members has been constituted as regards to the standards to be determined for ensuring quality and they also claim that is in the interest of farmers. Of these 50 members, only 2 are somewhat connected with food processing, that is, one is from grapes estate and another from prawn cultivation sector. So, the remaining 48 members are from the corporate world. I wonder how they can ensure quality and standards when it comes to food when they are not directly connected with this at all. With these people I do not know how they can help the farmers. The labourers are also made to go in for medical check up and tests under this Act. This comes in the way of labourer's interest. We have very many small shops and traders and most of them are run by people who are not at all rich. In a country where there are lakhs of people living below the poverty line, this kind of food standards must not come in the way of small traders to earn their livelihood. The food materials used by the poor people are subjected to this rigid Act thereby affecting the people who cannot afford. Only small traders are handling this. In our country, we do not have enough testing laboratories and in Tamil Nadu we have only 7 laboratories. When we do not have adequate facilities to go in for testing and ensuring standards, the officials take an upper hand and this even leads to corruption. As of now, there is bribe in obtaining licences. Hence, I urge upon the Government to have a re-look and review this Act and prevent officials from getting an upper hand resorting to corrupt practices. It would be better this law is withdrawn.