



## **India's food safety authority proposes traffic light labelling for foods sold at schools**

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**The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) wants to introduce a traffic light labelling scheme for foods sold in school canteens and vending machines, in a bid to curb consumption of sugary drinks, heavily processed foods and confectionery.**

The regulator believes that using colour-coded labelling will encourage the consumption of healthier 'green' foods — mainly fresh fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, lean meat, eggs and fish — and discourage the consumption of 'red' foods — those with high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) content such as deep-fried foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, processed foods and confectionery.

'Yellow' foods such as ice cream, dairy-based desserts, breads, biscuits, processed and packaged soups and meat or fish products, and cereal and malt-based beverages, are suggested to be taken in small portions and with reduced frequency.

*"The foods and beverages categorised as green or yellow may be included on the school menu and reviewed by the School Health and Wellness Team on periodic basis with a focus to continuously improve the safety and nutritious quality of foods served in schools,"* said the authority.

This will apply to all 'school meals' that are sold or supplied on the school campus, whether through the canteens, school mess or vending machines.

The draft regulation also states: *"The school authority selling or catering school meals must obtain a license or be registered as a food business operator (FBO) from the concerned licensing authority under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006."*

### **Promoting a healthy, well-balanced diet**

Furthermore, the proposal says that school authorities shall encourage and promote a balanced diet as defined by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).

*"It should provide around 50-60% of total calories from carbohydrates, preferably from complex carbohydrates, about 10-15% from proteins and 20-30% from both visible and invisible fat. In addition, it should provide other non-nutrients such as dietary fibre and antioxidants, which bestow positive health benefits,"* said the FSSAI.

Beyond that, school authorities shall also forbid the sale of HFSS foods to school children within their premises.

*"Food business operators manufacturing HFSS food products shall not advertise such foods to children in school premises,"* it further stated.

As for the state, the authorities will ensure that there will be no sale of HFSS foods to school children within 50m of the school.

### **Food safety and hygiene rules outlined**

Other detailed guidelines include *"safety, sanitary and hygiene requirements"* for the handling, preparation and transportation of food.

Among them, they state that food handlers or cooks shall wear clean and proper gear, and will have to go for periodic medical examinations to ensure they do not have any infectious disease.

The traffic light labelling scheme and draft regulations were drawn up by the FSSAI based on suggestions from an independent panel of nutrition and health experts.

The FSSAI has sought views, comments and suggestions from industry stakeholders on the draft, which will become the 'Food Safety and Standards (Safe and Wholesome Food for School Children) Regulations, 2018'.