



## **Establishing organic food products' traceability mandatory, says FSSAI**

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Stating that it was mandatory for manufacturers of organic food products to establish their traceability, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a gazette notification containing organic food regulations, laying down those pertaining to their labelling, certification and import.

The notification stated, "Traceability shall be established upto the producer level as applicable under the systems mentioned in Regulation 4 and shall include any other requirements prescribed by the food authority to maintain the organic integrity of the food product."

Regulation 4 of this notification describes the applicability of the systems, which include (i) the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP); (ii) the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India) and (iii) any other system or standards as may be notified by the country's apex food regulator from time to time.

These regulations, which are called the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017, will come into force on July 1, 2018.

Amit Dhanuka, former president, All India Food Processors' Association (AIFPA), said it was a welcome move.

He added, "Post July 1, no random company will be able to claim that its products are organic. There were a number of products which claimed to be organic, but were actually not."

"With the organic mark and with this move, the end consumer will benefit. The consumer will be assured that the product they consuming is 100 per cent organic if the mark is there on the product," Dhanuka stated.

It is pertinent to mention here that FSSAI has already released the logo for organic food with the name Jaivik Bharat. It also has been made mandatory for the food business operators (FBOs) to carry this logo on the label of the organic food.

Meanwhile, the regulations stated that no person shall manufacture, pack, sell, offer for sale, market or otherwise distribute or import any organic food unless they comply with the requirements laid down under these regulations.

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Moreover, FBOs shall also comply with other relevant regulations as applicable, like those related to handling, transportation, standards for contaminants, toxins, residue levels [except for the residues of insecticides for which the maximum limits shall be five per cent of the maximum limits prescribed or the level of quantification (LoQ), whichever is higher].

Further, the regulations said that the seller of organic food, either exclusively or as a part of his retail merchandise, shall display such food in a manner distinguishable from the display of non-organic food.

Besides, on the import of organic food, they stated, "Organic food imports, under bilateral or multilateral agreements, on the basis of the equivalence of standards between NPOP and the organic standards of the respective exporting countries, shall not be required to be recertified on import to India subject to their compliance with the provisions of the Act, the rules and regulations made thereunder."

The ministry of agriculture, Government of India, has also decided to come up with a new organic farming policy to boost the organic farming in the country. With Sikkim declared as the organic state, many states have adopted organic farming.

An official with the ministry stated organic farming could be beneficial to the farmers due to its demand, particularly because export opportunities were great. It was stated that the policy was prepared jointly by the ministries of agriculture, commerce and industry and food processing industries.

Commerce and industry minister Suresh Prabhu also stated at a recent trade event that his ministry was already working on an agri-export policy.