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FSSAI wants food companies to set up teams for manage recalls by Sounak Mitra

In a letter to food companies such as ITC, HUL, Dabur and Nestle, FSSAI said the food companies will also need to submit a 'fresh plan on the recall management'



FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal. The food regulator outlined a 10-step process that companies will have to follow for a recall. Photo: Pradeep Gaur/Mint

New Delhi: Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the country's food regulator, on Monday said it has asked the top 200 food companies that have procured licences from the FSSAI headquarters to set up exclusive teams to manage food recalls if the situation arises in the future.

FSSAI IN NEWS

In a letter written to companies such as Kolkata-based ITC Ltd, the country's largest packaged goods company Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), New Delhi-based Dabur India Ltd and Nestle India Ltd, the local unit of Swiss packaged food company Nestle SA, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India said the companies will also need to submit a "fresh plan on the recall management".

A copy of the letter has been reviewed by *Mint*.

The move is part of the food regulator's plan to "implement food recall regulations across India" that it notified in November 2017, putting the onus on companies by stating that the primary responsibility of implementing any recall lies with food companies, as it believes a recall is directly linked to "serious defects in the manufacturing process".

It outlined a 10-step process that companies will have to follow for a recall.

The regulator has also asked companies to submit details of the food recall team within 30 days and the fresh recall plan within 60 days from 20 March, 2018.

The directive comes almost three years after FSSAI ordered Nestle India to recall Maggi instant noodles for alleged presence of monosodium glutamate and excess lead [on 5 June 2015](#), which turned out to be the largest food recall in India ever.

"As a responsible corporate citizen, we always abide by all relevant norms and regulations," a Nestlé India spokesperson said in an e-mailed statement.

According to the FSSAI letter, the food recall plan will be reviewed by FSSAI's regional offices every time any of the 200 food companies applies for renewal of its licence.

"Recall is not a common thing in India. The regulator's directive is part of preventive measures to assure consumers that companies make and sell safe food. This might have some cost pressure on companies, but that is not unjustified," said Rajat Wahi, partner (management consulting) at consulting firm Deloitte India.