



FSSAI notifies draft regulations for materials used to pack food items

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FSSAI has notified the draft regulations with respect to the packaging material used by food business operators (FBOs) to pack the food products. The country's apex food regulator, in a statement, has stated that these regulations would ensure safe packaging of food products, thereby reducing the health-related risks.

This packaging regulations, which will supersede the previous Packaging and Labelling Regulations, 2011, will be called Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018. Meanwhile, there will be a separate set of regulations on labelling.

And according to a senior FSSAI official, the subject of packaging, labelling, advertisement and claims were so vast that they needed separate regulations on each separately. Recently, the regulator also put out a draft on advertisement and claim regulations.

The regulations, according to FSSAI, prescribed the general and specific requirements with respect to packaging material, including types of packaging material and their respective Indian standards.

The material used for packaging must comply with the standards prescribed under these regulations, which prohibit the use of newspaper and other such materials containing inks and dyes for the purpose of packaging food products, while the stakeholders can send their comments within 30 days, i.e. May 1, 2018.

The regulations mentioned the migration limit, which is the maximum amount of the non-volatile substance released from the material into food simulants. Also, the regulations mention the specific migration limit, which is defined as the maximum permitted amount of a given substance released from a material or article into food or simulants.

They also prescribed the standards regarding paper and board material, glass containers, metal and metal alloys and plastic material used for packaging of the food products.

The regulations also mentioned the suggestive packaging for such product category as milk, fats, oil, fruits, vegetables, sweets, confectionery, cereals, salt, spices ,

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condiments, beverages, etc.

Experts, meanwhile, opined that packaging has a primary function of protecting the food. If it is not regulated, it can actually make the food unsafe due to the transfer of contaminants from the print on the package to the food itself.

The proposed draft aimed to adopt standards, which will regulate different packaging components, such as plastics, glass, paper, printing inks, etc. across the packaging supply chain.

“I would say that the drafted standard was the need of the hour. There have been several scandals across the globe which has raised concerns on packaging materials safety,” said industry analyst Jatin Takkar.

“Adopting a new set of rules set for packaging safety will not only help the packaging industry to evolve in terms of food safety, but also in terms of operational safety as well as environmental safety,” he added.

“The standards will also bridge the gap between regulations across the globe, and therefore, will deploy more opportunities for export,” Takkar said.

“Above all, the standards are intended to improve consumer safety,” he said, adding, “The upcoming standards will raise the bar on packaging safety. But yes, there are opportunities to make it more robust and at par with global standards.”

Takkar said, “However, the standards will evolve with time, with the increase in awareness levels, the capabilities of the packaging supply chain partners and the evolution of robust enforcement measures in India.”

“I would say that there is definitely a long way to go when you compare India’s regulator framework to those in Europe or the United States, but looking into the existing capabilities of the drafted packaging safety standards, it definitely sends out a positive message in terms of packaging safety,” he added.

When quizzed about the impact this would have on the industry, Takkar said, “In my opinion, I don’t think there would be any major conflict arising out of the new drafted standards for the food industry, since the packaging supply chain partners are quite evolved and solutions are available in the market.”

“The IS standards, which have been adopted by FSSAI, have already been published by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for years now, and the supply chain partners are more or less aligned with the same. The standards will definitely have a positive impact on consumer safety, with more and more FBOs moving in this direction,” he added.