

THE HINDU
BusinessLine

Dated: 16.05.2018 (Wednesday)

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Food safety body looking at global norms to finalise labelling regulations by Our Bureau



Companies voice concern over colour-coded labels

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is looking at global models adopted by various countries for labelling standards of packaged foods. This is being done before the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018, is finalised by the government.

In April, the regulator released the draft of the labelling regulations which has proposed front-of-the-pack nutritional information, besides red colour coded labels for foods which have high levels of fat, sugar and salt content. Some food companies have raised concerns about the red colour-coded labels.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said, *“Food businesses have no issues with front-of-pack labelling. They have raised concerns regarding the thresholds and colour-coded labels for HFSS foods. We are looking at various global models such as the Australia-New Zealand model that has voluntary star rating or the Mexico and UK model. We are seeking comments and views from stakeholders on the same before we finalise the labelling regulations.”*

The labelling regulations are likely to be finalised in the next two-three months.

“We want food businesses to begin taking cognizance of the fact that whatever they produce is important from a public health perspective and not just from their bottom-line perspective. It is being done in consumer interest. We have asked food companies for their game plan to look at launching healthier food options in the market,” he added.

FSSAI has also proposed that a company must make a declaration on the label in case its food product has 5 per cent or more of genetically engineered or genetically modified ingredients. “This has been proposed to increase consumer awareness. Imported GM food is coming to India whether its in the form of soya products and edible oils. In case of oils, GM is negligible.” he added.

Transfat content

Asked about the launch of WHO’s plan to remove transfat from the global food supply, Agarwal said, “We are also working on a goal to make India trans-fat free by 2022. The permitted levels of trans-fat content in edible oils has been set at 5 per cent. We are conducting various studies and getting opinions of experts on whether this needs to be further reduced.”

Meanwhile, FSSAI on Tuesday launched a nation-wide campaign to promote safe and nutritious food at workplace called SNF@Workplace. This has been done to encourage companies to ensure nutritious and hygienic food is served and consumed by their workforce in offices. FSSAI has also launched the ‘The Orange Book: Your Guide to Safe and Nutritious Food at the Workplace’ to highlight the role to be played by key stakeholders such as the administration, canteen establishment and the employees in ensuring safe and nutritious food at the workplace.