



‘FSSAI should ensure pack warning labels’

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Jaipur: City-based CUTS (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) International and global health experts have suggested the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to ensure that all food items and beverages have front-of-pack warning labels to help consumers make informed decisions. FSSAI is currently in the process of revising and receiving comments on the draft ‘Food Safety and Standard (Labeling & Display) Regulation, 2018’ in line with the global call by World Health Organization (WHO).

According to experts, excessive consumption of foods and beverages high in trans-fat, sodium, added sugar and saturated fat are a major cause of heart disease, stroke and premature deaths in India and around the world.

For Rajasthan, it holds a lot of significance as a recent study has revealed that the risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and other heart ailments among the people in the desert state is very high at 14-15% in the country after Kerala where the risk is highest at 19.5%. According to the study, Rajasthan and Punjab have highest consumption of vanaspati oil which has high levels of trans-fats.

“The warning labels with correct and visible information can act as a trigger in restricting the prevalence of cardiovascular and other heart diseases further and giving options for informed decision making to consumers in Rajasthan,” said George Cheriyan, director of CUTS International.

The FSSAI has committed to limit the amount of trans-fat in oils from the current permitted level of 5% to 2% by 2022. In 2015, the amount of trans-fat in oils was brought down from 10% to the current level.

“Consumers need to have the right information to be able to make informed decisions about what they eat, professor of nutrition at University of North Carolina,” Dr. Barry Popkin said in a statement.

Dr Popkin is one of the 28 international health and nutrition experts who have jointly submitted suggestions to the FSSAI in a letter written on June 13.

He said governments around the globe consider mandatory front-of-pack warning labels an effective and evidence-based way to improve diets.