

Alcohol bottles to carry health warnings from April 1

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E-Paper

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From April 1, all liquor bottles in the will have on their labels prominent statutory warnings, asking consumers to not drink and drive and outlining how alcohol consumption is harmful for health. The country's top food regulator, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), issued a notification on March 19, 2018, directing alcoholic beverage manufacturers to put on labels the following warnings: "Consumption of alcohol is injurious to health"; and "Be safe: Don't drink and drive".



For alcoholic beverage bottles up to 200 ml, the letters on the label, all in capitals, should not be less than 1.5 mm high; bottles larger than 200 ml will have letters 3mm tall. The apex food regulator had given a year's time to the food business operators to make the shift, and comply with the regulations that kick in from April 1, 2019.

"Alcoholic beverages are also regulated under the food safety Act. However, there were no labelling regulations created under the Act so far because of which the manufacturers used to follow the excise laws and standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standards. Now that we have created regulations, these will have to be adhered to," said Pawan Aggarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI.

The Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, had the standards drawn for only toddy because of its huge consumption in India. However, the food regulator proposed and notified last year the separate regulation for alcoholic beverages because of the presence of various imported and Indian manufactured alcoholic beverages being widely consumed.

The new regulation is called the Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages Standards) Regulation, 2018, and will hold for distilled alcoholic beverages (brandy, country liquor, gin, rum, vodka and whisky, liqueur or alcoholic cordial), wines, and beer. Apart from the warning, the specific labelling requirements will also need a declaration about alcohol content, allergen warning, no nutritional data, no health claim, restriction on words such as "non-intoxicating" or words implying similar meaning on the label of beverage containing more than 0.5% alcohol by volume.