

FSSAI directs high-risk food businesses to undergo mandatory audits

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E-Paper

The apex food regulator has directed high-risk category food businesses to conduct mandatory auditing by December 31, 2019. In August, FSSAI issued an order saying that high-risk category food businesses having Central licences falling under six categories shall be subjected to mandatory food safety auditing.

In its order dated August 13, 2019, it said, “As per the Food Safety Standards (Food Safety Auditing) Regulations, 2018, the food authority is directing that food businesses including dairy products and analogues, excluding products of food category 2.0; meat and meat products, including poultry; fish and fish products, including molluscs, crustaceans, and echinoderms; eggs and egg products; foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses (food for infant nutrition, etc.); and prepared food (catering, etc.), shall be subject to mandatory food safety auditing.

The regulator has now issued a clarification on the subject of mandatory food safety audit of the food businesses holding Central licences and falling under the high-risk categories under the Food Safety and Standards (Auditing) Regulations, 2018.

The clarification was issued for three questions, namely the date for commencement of the order, coverage of the mandatory auditing and the audit agency. A senior official with FSSAI stated that the food regulator received several queries on the subject, and based on the commonality queries, were divided into three main questions.



The first was when does the order come into effect? The clarification by FSSAI stated that the order will come into effect from the date of issue, i.e., August 13, 2019. However, the food businesses directed for mandatory audits, should get the first audit of their premises done by December 31, 2019.

The second question was about the coverage of the audit and whether the complete chain, including manufacturing, storage, transport, packaging, etc. involved in these product categories should get

mandatory auditing done?

FSSAI clarified, “It is important that the complete chain, from manufacturing to storage to transport, follow good hygienic practices. However, in the initial stage only the food businesses involved in the manufacturing and processing sector under the product category in the order of August 13, 2019 should get their premises mandatorily audited.”

The clarification added that such premises which holds Central licence but do not carry out any food-related activity are exempted from such auditing. The third clarification was about conflict of interest. It dwelled on the question: Can an auditing agency audit a food business that they have already certified or provided training?

To this, the regulator said, “No, as per Section 12-1, of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing Regulations), 2018, an agency or its auditor should have provided any training, guidance, food safety certification or consultancy or not carried out internal audits to the food business or its parent or subsidiary for last two years.”

FSSAI said that all FBOs were directed to comply with the contents of the order read with the clarification issued thereafter.