

Outlook

22 JUNE 2020 | SOURCE: PTI

Ban on sale of loose edible oils can check adulteration: SEA

New Delhi, Jun 22 (PTI) Banning sale of loose edible oils is the only solution for addressing the menace of adulteration in the country, industry body SEA said on Monday in the wake of a government panel formed to probe such an issue in case of mustard oil.

The government committee, without any representation from the edible oils sector, will look into the alleged adulteration in mustard oil and submit a report in a month, it said in a letter written to its members.

Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) President Atul Chaturvedi said, "Loose oil sales in India is officially banned for many years now but somehow, the law has never been implemented."

"The problem of adulteration can be very easily tackled by strict implementation of the ban on sale of loose oils. But, somehow, over the years, extension after extension has been given and the implementation has remained only on paper," he said.

Chaturvedi said the reason cited by authorities responsible for the implementation is that banning loose oil sales would harm the poor of India.

"This is a fallacy that has been talked about for ages and has done more harm than good to the poor of India. Do we want our poor to be cheated and their health compromised. This is skewed logic and it's high time this argument is treated with the contempt it deserves," he observed.

The cost of packaging in India is also very low at Rs 3-4 per kg for delivering scientifically packed oil to consumers, he added.

To address the problem of adulteration, the SEA president suggested that all sales whether in packed or loose oils should only be allowed between registered dealers.

"This will ensure that trail is always available and anyone passing the system can be easily hauled up," he said adding that strict implementation may go a long way in cleaning up the malaise and help bring unorganised and unregistered sectors into mainstream.

"Banning and strictly implementing sales of loose oils would go a long way in ensuring that the menace of adulteration gets curtailed," he said.

Traceability is ensured when goods are sold in packed form as the label mentions the name as well as other details of the manufacturer. No one would want his fair name to be tarnished, he added.

Stating that there is a difference between blending and adulteration of edible oils, SEA said blending of oils is permitted by regulatory bodies like FSSAI and AGMARK that have prescribed strict standards for product as well as labelling requirements.

Blended edible oils are important as it provides several nutritional and health benefits and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines also support oil blending for optimum nutrition.

According to the SEA, adulteration, on the other hand, is clandestine and illegal activity carried out by unscrupulous players.

"As mustard oil is an expensive oil, lower priced alternatives can be mixed to earn extra bucks. The strong pungent smell of mustard oil masks the identity of other oils. The perpetrators of adulteration are not only playing with the health of gullible consumers but also poor farmers as it ends up reducing the value of mustard seed," it said.

According to reports, India consumes much more mustard oil than it actually produces. PTI LUX
HRS
