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FMCG giants to appeal food watchdog against draft labelling policy, say 70% items will get code red

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E-Paper

Fast moving consumer goods companies will appeal to food safety regulator FSSAI against its draft labelling policy that could affect nearly 70% of the packaged food available in the market, said a media report. Under the proposed policy, companies will be required to declare nutritional information on the front of the product package. Harmful ingredients such as saturated fat, trans-fat, added sugar and sodium per serve will find a mention on the front cover, which could result in higher repackaging costs.



The FMCG companies plan to make a joint representation to the regulator, seeking a reassessment of the proposed policy. The companies are concerned that if the FSSAI policy is implemented, more than two-thirds of the packaged food available in the market will need to have a red code, CNBC-TV18 reported citing unidentified sources. The sources also said that this could mean that the companies will have to change the composition of existing and future products to avoid red coding.

FMCG industry, which is the fourth largest contributor to the Indian economy and within it, food products is the leading segment accounting for over one-third of the total FMCG industry. Major players of the same include Hindustan Unilever, Dabur, Nestle, Amul, and Britannia.

FSSAI's draft labelling policy

The draft labelling policy also requires blocks of nutrients for "High Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) food to be coloured red. FSSAI said that this will help consumers to make an informed choice.

Among other features of the policy, the food watchdog has also laid out nutrient thresholds above which food will fall under the HFFS category and hence will be coded red. The draft regulations were issued several days ago and stakeholders were given 30 days for feedback on the same.

The consumer goods companies have raised issues about the threshold being set to global levels which may or may not be relevant to the Indian dietary requirements, sources of the media house said, adding that the coding discriminates between packaged food and fresh food with the same level of FSS.

FMCG industry is not the only one in criticism of draft labelling policy. Earlier, the sugar industry had also termed it "a wrong move at the wrong time," Prakash Naiknavare, managing director, National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF) said.