



FSSAI initiates work on framing regulations on Genetically Modified Food

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E-Paper

The Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has initiated work on framing regulations on Genetically Modified (GM) Food. It said Section 22 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 provides inter-alia, that no person shall manufacture, distribute, sell or import any genetically modified (GM) article of food except as otherwise provided under the Act and regulations made thereunder.



The intended regulations would essentially lay down procedures for safety assessment and approval of foods including imported foods, derived from genetic modification processes based on the internationally well established and accepted scientific principles, procedures and best practices before being approved for food purposes.

These draft regulations will, after formal approval of FSSAI's Scientific Panel, Scientific Committee and the Authority, be notified in the Gazette to elicit comments of various stakeholders which will be duly considered after which the regulations will be finalized with the approval of the Government.

FSSAI said it is needless to state, while assessment prior to the approval of such foods by FSSAI would be in respect of the food safety, aspects related to their environmental impacts would be duly assessed by the GEAC prior to their approval as food by the FSSAI.

Further, without prejudice to the requirement of prior approval of GM foods manufactured, sold or imported into the country as envisaged in the above-mentioned regulations in accordance with the Section 22 of the FSS Act, 2006; the FSSAI has also framed draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations that also specify threshold levels for labelling requirements of GM foods.

These proposed regulations will further bind food businesses to provide appropriate information to the consumers so as to enable them to exercise their informed choice in respect of purchase of foods, including GM foods, should any such foods be approved for manufacture or import in India.

These draft regulations will also be notified in the gazette for public comments which will be duly considered before the regulations are finalized. The food watchdog, in a release, said, it may be further explained that the threshold level for labelling of GM foods refers to the maximum permissible level (in percent) of unintentional and technically unavoidable GMO content in food that does not call for labelling.

A large number of countries including Japan, Canada, Thailand and Indonesia prescribe a threshold value of 5% by weight. EU prescribes threshold of 0.9 %.

However, it may be pointed out that the cost of demonstrating/verifying compliance to the specified threshold increases as the threshold level decreases. It may also be kept in mind that irrespective of the threshold level, the safety of all GM products need to be well established and proven to be as safe as non- GM products, said FSSAI.

The proposed labelling of GM food in India falls within the range of internationally followed threshold level and seems to be practical and cost effective.