

The NEWS Minute

Food regulator FSSAI issues new guidelines for e-commerce food companies

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E-paper

This could be a fallout of the recent incident where a food delivery executive was found consuming food, from the packets he was about to deliver to a Zomato client. The Indian regulator, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has again stepped in to issue new guidelines for online food order and delivery companies. If, on the earlier occasion, FSSAI had to take stock of the quality of food preparation following sporadic complaints from customers, this time it concerns the last-mile delivery of food and related issues.



This could be an immediate result of the recent incident where a food delivery executive was found consuming food, from the packets he was about to deliver to a Zomato client. The new FSSAI guidelines indicate that the food can be intercepted at any point from the time it's being picked up from the place where it is cooked, till it is delivered to the client. For dine-in restaurants, there is a system in place where the food inspectors can drop in any time and ensure that only fresh food is prepared

and the ingredients being used in the food preparation are safe for consumption. This inspection facility and authority is now being extended to the food on the move as well.

The online food order and delivery platforms will have to make a mention of all mandatory information mentioned in the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act on their respective websites so that the customers are aware of their rights while ordering food. Food should have a remaining shelf life of 30% or 45 days before expiry at the time of delivery, the guidelines indicate. The last will be more relevant to some of the entrants into the grocery and food products, including fresh foods delivering online platforms like Amazon Pantry, BigBasket and Grofers. For the record, there have been complaints of expired or near expiry products being delivered by some of these firms in the past. There is a rule that where the product is displayed on their websites or apps, the expiry date should also appear alongside.

Following the recent incident of food being consumed by the delivery executive which went viral on social media, there is a clear mention of the delivery executives as well, in the FSSAI guidelines; "food business operators need to ensure that the last-mile delivery is undertaken by trained personnel and that the safety of food products is not compromised at the time of delivery". The top two food delivery companies, Swiggy and Zomato, have reacted to the FSSAI directives, saying they remain committed to maintaining the strictest of standards while making food deliveries and they will cooperate with FSSAI in every way possible.