

A healthy measure

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed leading food aggregators such as Zomato, Swiggy and UberEats to delist all restaurants and eateries that do not have an FSSAI licence or registration. It has also asked them to submit a report on the action taken to delist such eateries or food vendors from their platforms by July 31.

The move came after the food safety regulator received a series of complaints about sub-standard food being supplied by restaurants and vendors listed on these delivery platforms. The regulator has ordered 10 such online food deliver firms to 'debar' non-licensed or unregistered restaurants or eateries from their platforms immediately and to ensure compliance with the food safety rules and regulations. These firms are Zomato, Swiggy, UberEats, Foodpanda, Fassos, FoodCloud, Foodmingo, JusFood, BoxB and LimeTray.

This is also significant as the food safety authority had operationalised guidelines for e-commerce food service platforms in February. Under the guidelines, it is mandatory for them to display the FSSAI licence number of the restaurants and eateries listed on their platforms. In addition they also need to have an agreement with these listed eateries regarding compliance with the FSS Act and Rules.

The regulator has come to know that most of these or all of these have been not following the guidelines. Unhygienic eateries are a common sight all over the country and majority of the

people street food. Tie up with such unhealthy joints gives them a brand placement. These apps also attract customers by providing huge discounts. The Indian Consumer Complaints Forum has received as many as 257 complaints against Swiggy, a food delivery app, of which the company has resolved only 14. Swiggy's customer satisfaction stood at only five per cent.

As contacting personnel of the apps is an unfriendly exercise, customers have taken to twitter and other online platforms to complain. The food delivery sector written off not too long ago in the country, has seen a revival over the past six months. Everyone is rushing into to invest in the delivery system. The food technology sector is expected to touch at least \$2.5 billion by 2021 from its current size of about \$700 million. The online food deliver market is growing at a steady 15 per cent quarter-on-quarter in terms of daily food orders.

Top cities for food tech firms include Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkota and Chennai (the latest entrant). Here is where the regulator's role becomes key. One cannot afford to be a dirty nation in this modern age. Profiteering is being frowned upon everywhere. Quality is the key word of food industry.

World is progressing towards biodegradable packing systems. The Regulator is now proposing to punish those obstructing the work of a food safety officer or threatening someone from discharging his duties. It is recommended that imprisonment of not less than six months and up to two years besides a penalty of Rs 5 lakh be imposed.

Several other amendments are also being brought in to the existing law to impose quality controls strictly. It is time for us to take quality seriously.

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