

Food Import Clearance System to be notified as essential service in lockdown

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The FSSAI has decided to notify 'Food Import Clearance System' as essential service during the lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic and all the import offices of the apex food regulator shall remain open and functioning on every working day from 9.30 am-6 pm.

The FSSAI has in this regards made an announcement and added that it has its Authorised Officers at six locations namely Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Cochin and Tuticorin covering 21 points of entries for ensuring compliance to the provisions of FSS Act, 2006, and Regulations made thereunder. Further, there are another 396 locations throughout the country where Customs officials have been notified as Authorised Officers by FSSAI.

And FSSAI's Food Import Clearance System has been seamlessly integrated with the Customs ICE GATE (Indian Customs Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data Interchange Gateway) while selective sampling and testing of food articles on the basis of risk profiling is being done by the FSSAI.

According to the FSSAI, the food articles when referred to it for clearance by the Customs Authorities are subjected to scrutiny of documents, visual inspection, sampling and testing in order to determine whether or not they conform to the safety and quality standards established and laid down under various Food Safety and Standards Regulations. If sample is found conforming then No Objection Certificate (NOC) is generated and if not conforming, then Non-Conforming Report (NCR) is generated.

Meanwhile, FSSAI has further extended the provision of the provisional NOC to imported food products amid lockdown for maintaining the supplies of commodities including edible oils and food grains till May 30, 2020.

The FSSAI's notice in this regards says that the importer shall declare and submit the undertaking declaration in the form to concerned Authorised Officer who is directed to carry out visual inspection on the same day without delay and upon satisfactory visual inspection shall draw samples and issue provisional no objection certificate without waiting for analysis report from the laboratory.

The final NOC shall be given after the analysis report comes from the laboratory. Previously the NOC was given till April 15, 2020.