

FSSAI sets up expert panel to look into draft labelling regulations

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to form a three-member committee to look into the draft food labelling and display regulations. The regulations have proposed making red colour-coded labels mandatory on packaged food products which are high in fat, sugar and salt contents.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said, “The pre-draft was earlier sent to the Health Ministry for finalisation. However, industry stakeholders have expressed concerns. So we have decided to set up a panel of experts with health and nutrition background to look into the draft regulations.” He said that front-of-the-pack labels are required to make consumers more aware about healthy and unhealthy food products. The expert panel will be led by B Sesikeran, former director of National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), and comprise current NIN director Hemalatha and AIIMS’ Nikhil Tandon.

Agarwal was speaking at a national consultation on food labelling regulations for safe and healthy food organised by CUTS International in collaboration with FSSAI.

FSSAI has, in the past, said it is open to suggestions from industry stakeholders and it will look at labelling regulations adopted by other countries across the world. The draft labelling regulations were released in April. Industry stakeholders believe these may have an adverse impact on the evolving packaged food industry.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, said India can learn from the best practices from the other countries such as Denmark, Norway and Singapore on labelling and trans-fat regulations. He said the consultation was an attempt to begin a dialogue among stakeholders on the proposed draft labelling regulations.

Recently, several companies have pledged to FSSAI’s Eat Right Movement and have made voluntary commitments to reduce salt, sugar and fat in their products. FSSAI is likely to push more and more companies to make similar voluntary commitments in the coming days.