

Food service cos with 10 or more outlets must mention calories against items

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Food service establishments having Central licence or outlets at 10 or more locations now have to mention the calorific value (in kcal per serving and serving size) against the food items displayed on the menu cards or boards or booklets and the reference information on calorie requirements shall also be displayed clearly and prominently as “An average active adult requires 2,000 kcal energy per day, however, calorie needs may vary”.

The FSSAI, in this regard, notified a regulation in the gazette called the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) First Amendment Regulations, 2020, and this regulation will come into force from January 1, 2022, while compliance before this date shall be voluntary.

Food service establishments will also have to mention the information specified against the food items displayed on the menu cards or boards or booklets including information relating to logos for vegetarian or non-vegetarian products and allergens.

According to the FSSAI, the provisions of this regulation shall not be applicable to event caterers and food service premises that operate for less than 60 days in a calendar year (consecutively or non-consecutively) and self-serve condiments that are free of charge and not listed on the menu along with special-order items or modified meals and menu items as per request of the customer.

Besides, food service establishments shall also provide nutritional information if applicable and information relating to organic food or ingredients, if claimed, for the food items sold by them to consumers upon request in the form of booklets or handouts or on their website: provided that deviation of 25 per cent may be tolerated in case of nutritional information declaration, says the regulation.

Further, e-commerce Food Business Operators (FBOs) were asked to provide this information on their websites wherever applicable.

In this regard, Ashwin Bhadri, CEO of Equinox Labs, states that many food establishments with a health-conscious customer base have already implemented the mentioned approach, however, the FSSAI mandating it for a certain sector might prove to be a game-changer for food safety in India.

Equinox Labs, in association with Swiggy, has recently introduced 'Swiggy-Plus', a nutrition programme that calculates the nutritional value (including the calorific value) of recipes.

Bhadri observes, "The concept has been long-awaited. Consumers now have the choice to look at nutrition labels when selecting amidst processed and packaged foods. Many food service establishments have experienced customers asking for nutritional details of recipes in the past and given the current situation, it is expected that consumers will be more interested to know the nutritional value of their food."