

Now, packaged foods industry will have to be true to its words

[MEENAKSHI VERMA AMBWANI](#)



Pawan Kumar Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI

FSSAI to notify claims and advertisement regulations soon

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 13

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will soon notify its final regulations on claims and advertisements for the packaged foods industry. This is aimed at making companies more accountable for their health and nutritional claims to protect consumer interest.

The regulator, on Tuesday, also released the interim findings of its milk survey. Less than 10 per cent of the 6,432 samples tested were found to have contaminants such as residues of pesticides (1.2 per cent), antibiotics, aflatoxin and ammonium sulphate.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said: “We will soon notify the regulations on claims and advertisements, which have got the final approvals from the Health Ministry.”

Through these regulations, FSSAI aims to put restrictions on the use of certain words on food labels — such as natural, fresh, original, traditional, premium, finest, best, authentic, genuine, and real — unless the products meet specific conditions.

With the implementation of these regulations, packaged food companies will need to ensure that any claims regarding nutritional or health attributes about their products are scientifically substantiated.

In addition, they will need to ensure that product advertisements do not suggest that their products were a complete meal replacement, or undermine the importance of healthy lifestyles.

The regulations will define norms for nutrient-content claims and those regarding non-addition of salt and sugar, besides specifying standardised statements for health claims for food companies.

Milk survey

Meanwhile, the food safety regulator released interim finding of the National Milk Quality Survey 2018, which stated that only 12 of the 6,432 samples collected were found to have adulterants such as detergents urea and hydrogen peroxide that affect the safety of milk.

Milk samples were also tested for 18 pesticides, 93 antibiotics and veterinary drugs, aflatoxin M1 and ammonium sulphate. “Less than 10 per cent (638 out of 6,432 samples) had contaminants that make milk unsafe for consumption. In all these cases, milk is getting contaminated due to poor quality of feed, poor farm practices, and irresponsible use of antibiotics... But it is restricted to a few pockets and in some States, and these can be addressed through targeted awareness-building initiatives,” FSSAI stated.

Agarwal, however, added that currently there are no regulations for ammonium sulphate in milk, and that FSSAI will consider if tolerance limits needed to be set.

The survey findings also raise concerns regarding quality parameters of milk. “About 19.6 per cent (1,261) samples did not meet the set limits for SNF. In another 3.4 per cent (218 samples) of the total samples, sugar and maltodextrin was found to be added,” it stated.

Agarwal said that quality issues were higher in raw milk compared to processed milk, and may depend on the breed of cattle, dilution through water, or rearing practices. “But we were surprised to find non-compliance of quality parameters in processed milk also. We will take this up with the processed milk companies and look at setting up a robust monitoring mechanism,” he added.