



FSSAI notifies new pkg regulations, replacing pkg requirements in FSSR

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FSSAI, India's apex food regulator, has notified the new packaging regulations, replacing all provisions regarding packaging requirements prescribed in the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.

The new regulations aim to adopt standards which will regulate different packaging components, such as plastics, glass, paper, metal, printing inks, etc. across the packaging supply chain.

They give general and specific requirement with respect to packaging materials for food products, as well as prescribe the overall migration and specific migration limits of contaminants for packaging materials. They shall come into force from July 1, 2019.

The regulations also specify the suggestive list of packaging materials for different food product categories. As per these regulations, the packaging materials used for packing or storing the food products shall conform to the Indian standards provided in the schedules.

With these new regulations coming in place, FBOs have to take responsibility that the packaging material supplier is providing the safe and food grade material complying with the standards provided in the regulations, while the stakeholders; consultation and mass awareness building amongst consumers and food businesses would precede the implementation of the new packaging regulations.

Also, taking cognisance of the carcinogenic effect of inks and dyes, these regulations also prohibit the use of newspaper and such other materials for packing or wrapping of food articles and include the respective Indian standards for printing inks for use on food packages.

Further, these regulations prohibit packaging material made of recycled plastics, including carry bags for packaging, storing, carrying or dispensing articles of food.

According to the Food Safety Standards Authority of India, the industry needs to follow an

integrated approach to packaging safety, wherein information and knowledge needs to be shared across all partners of the supply chain to ensure consumer safety.

The apex food regulator, in its statement, said that these regulations address all concerns that came out of the two studies conducted by FSSAI recently through the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), Mumbai, and the National Test House (NTH), Kolkata.

These two studies had shown that the packaging material used by the organised sector was largely safe, but there were concerns about the use of packaging material by the unorganised/informal sector.

“Further, there were serious concerns about safety of loose packaging material. Thus, these regulations prohibit packaging material made of recycled plastics including carry bags for packaging, storing, carrying or dispensing articles of food,” said the statement released by FSSAI.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, opined that the new packaging regulations would raise the bar of food safety in India to the next level.

“There would be difficulties in implementation of these regulations, particularly for the unorganised sector. Thus, sufficient lead time of about six months has been given before the regulations come into force,” he added.

Agarwal said, “The primary objective of packaging is to protect the food contents from microbiological, chemical, physical and atmospheric contamination and preserve the food and thereby protect consumer’s health.”

“Good packaging also ensures that there is no change in sensory properties or composition of food when packed. Packaging is essential and critical for promoting food safety, extended shelf-life and thereby enhancing food security,” he added.

“Recognising the importance of packaging in the food sector and its impact on food safety, the packaging regulations have been separated from the labelling regulations and a separate scientific panel for food packaging is planned,” he added.

Packaging has been always considered as a protection for food, but has been overlooked as a source of potential contaminants.

As packaging plays an important role in ensuring food safety, and it is the primary contact material through which migration of harmful substances may occur, and it may affect food quality and safety both at the same time. Therefore, to ensure that packed food is safe, FSSAI has proposed these regulations.

Focus/through Institute	Failure (Overall and by packaging material)
Migration of chemical contamination and heavy metals from packaging materials through IIP, Mumbai	<p>Organised sector: 870 samples; Overall failure: 0.2per cent</p> <p>Only two samples were found non-conforming in overall migration (laminated pouch being used for frozen fish and plastic cap of PET Jar being used for pickles)</p> <p>Unorganised sector: 380 samples; Overall failure:13.4 per cent.</p> <p>Fifty-one samples were found non-conforming in heavy metal contaminant (plastic pouches/lids/closures/containers/bottles/laminates/bags, etc., woven bags, laminates, aluminium foil, etc.)</p>
Total samples analysed: 1,250	
Chemical contamination from loose packaging material through National Test House (NTH), Kolkata	<p>No failure</p> <p>Paper cups for tea, plastic cups - drinking water, thermocol glasses/plates and transparent disposable containers with lids.</p> <p>Less than five per cent failure in overall migration:</p> <p>Paper cups for ice creams (2.4 per cent), plastic glasses with lids (3.2 per cent), disposable plastic containers (0.9 per cent) and zip lock pouches (0.7per cent).</p> <p>More than five per cent failure in overall migration:</p>
Total samples analysed: 1,760	<p>Coloured carry bags (80 per cent), black carry bags (59 per cent), disposable containers with aluminium coating (24 per cent), sweet boxes (21 per cent),paper plates (16 per cent), polythene pouches (11per cent), plastic cups for tea/coffee (six per cent)and plastic spoons with shiny coating (six per cent).</p>

Meanwhile, commenting on the subject, Jatin Takkar, industry expert, said that the new regulation was the need of the hour, and adopting a new set of rules for packaging safety will not only help the packaging industry to evolve in terms of food safety, but also in terms of operational safety as well as environmental safety. The standards will also bridge the gap between regulations across the globe, and therefore, will deploy more opportunities for export.

“In my opinion, the upcoming standard will certainly raise the bar on packaging safety, but yes, there are opportunities to make it more robust and at par with global standards. However, standards will evolve with time with the increase of awareness levels, capabilities of the packaging supply chain partners and evolving of robust enforcement measures in India. I would say that there is definitely a big way to go when you compare it to the European or US regulatory framework, but looking into the new packaging safety regulation, it definitely sends out a positive message in terms of packaging safety,” he added.

Takkar said,“I don’t think there would be any major conflict arising out of the new regulation for the food industry, since the packaging supply chain partners are quite evolved and solutions are available in the market.”

“The IS standards which have been adopted by FSSAI have already been published by BIS for years now, and supply chain partners are more or less aligned with the same. The standard will definitely have a positive impact on consumer safety, with more and more FBOs moving in this direction,” he added.