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FSSAI bans plastic, newspaper packaging of food items

Dated: - 29th December 2018 (Saturday)

E-paper

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The country's top food regulator has prohibited the use of recycled plastic or newspaper and magazine pages for packaging of food items, in a bid to crackdown on use of packaging material that poses a health risk. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has framed new food packaging regulations that are in the process of being notified. The regulations will come into effect from July 1. "The packaging of food regulations have been sent for publishing and will raise the bar for food safety in India. Packaging is an integral part of the process and we have framed regulations to address the it," said Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI.



Acknowledging the importance of packaging in the food sector and its impact on food safety, the packaging regulations have been separated from the labelling ones. The new regulations replace the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011. Besides general and specific requirement for packaging material, the regulations also prescribe overall and specific migration limits of contaminants for plastic packaging materials. There is a suggestive list of packing materials for different food product categories.

The main concern for the food regulator is the unorganised sector that found to be making use of hazardous packaging material in the surveys that were commissioned by the regulator. Of the 380 samples picked up from the unorganised sector, 51 samples were found to be non-conforming, taking overall rate to 13.4%, according to a survey report that FSSAI commissioned. The food items in these instances were found contaminated even with heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, etc. "The surveys that we commissioned have shown that the packaging material used by the organized sector is largely safe but it's the unorganised sector that is a cause for concern for us, especially loose packaging material," he said.