

## **FSSAI to notify processing aids to bring clarity to food processing**

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FSSAI, the country's apex food regulator, has decided to list and notify processing aids, in a bid to bring in more clarity with respect to processing of food. In this regard, an appendix is being added to the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Amendment Regulations, 2018. FSSAI has issued a notice seeking comments on the subject.

The draft notification consists of definitions of the different processing aids used by food manufacturers.

"There are enzymes that speed up the process, while there are cooling agents that aid in rapidly freezing the products. Also present in the notification are the names of these processing substances (under different categories) that can be used by the manufacturers with their maximum residue levels (MRLs). To top it all, it also mentions food products, wherein these substances can be added," said Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs.

Processing aids are the minute substances that play an important role in bringing out the finished product in its best version. These are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are used in a variety of foods, including meat and poultry, and are present in negligible amounts in the finished product.

However, experts state that the existence of such processing aids in any finished product does not affect the appearance or taste, and most importantly, they have no major impact on public health, if consumed in acceptable daily intake (ADI).

Bhadri explained, "The functions of processing aids cannot be neglected. They perform numerous roles in the food processing, including enhancing food safety by reducing potential contamination and facilitating and easier removal of impurities. It also acts as a pH control agent, a catalyst and a clarifying agent, as well as helps in stabilising the final product."

"The processing aids are regulated in the same manner as any other substance added to food. There were a lot of amendments that were driven on the processing aids but couldn't do justice

to the arising queries,” he added.

“The confusion and doubts were still prevalent amongst all the FBOs and thus, were needed to be unearthed. The FBOs can now refer to the appendix and can help figure out the necessities,” Bhadri said.

“The inclusion of an appendix for the same will provide a clarity on the different processing aid categories in detail, its usage and benefits. Every single category has been mentioned with appropriate explanations. I am sure the FBOs will be enlightened on this topic and will benefit their products, largely,” he added.

Meanwhile, there are about 12 processing aid categories that can be used by food business operators (FBOs) in the respective food products. Solvents for extraction, bleaching and washing agents and enzyme immobilisation agents are some of the categories mentioned in the list.

“The appendix will facilitate general standards that will be followed pan-India resulting in uniformity of quality. The processing of food products shall take place in the prescribed manner and will suppress the fraudulent ways practiced before and the resulting discrepancies,” said Bhadri.