

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Punjab bars online food aggregators from delivery from outlets sans hygiene rating

TNN | Dec 26, 2019



CHANDIGARH: The online food delivery aggregator companies operating in Punjab will not be able to deliver food from outlets without hygiene rating.

The decision has been taken by food and drug administration (FDA), Punjab after these firms showed reluctance in getting the food business operators (FBOs) registered with them rated for hygiene, despite repeated directions from the authorities.

HOW THEY ARE RATED		
HYGIENE RATING	CATEGORY	SCORE IN %AGE
5	V Good	81-100
4	Good	61-80
3	Fair	41-60
2	Needs improvement	21-40



There are about one lakh food outlets in the state, of which about 5,000 are registered with

different online food delivery aggregator companies. Of total, these companies have managed to get only about 200 food outlets rated. Unhappy with the response, the FDA has decided to take action against the erring aggregators under Section 30 of the Food and Safety Act which empowers FDA commissioner to prohibit manufacture, storage, distribution or sale of any article of food for non-compliance.

All the major the online food delivery aggregator companies - Zomato, Swiggy, Uber Eats and Food Panda - were first asked in May this year to get audit and hygiene rating of FBOs registered with them from 23 companies empanelled with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) by August 31. After getting no response, they were given time till October 31. As per directions, only those FBOs who get three or higher hygiene rating would be allowed to supply food.

The cost involved in getting the outlets rated is one of the key reasons for non-compliance. The FSSAI empanelled companies charge fee between Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000 for assessment of a single restaurant. The final ratings are given only after compliance of shortcomings pointed out during assessment, which also include cost.

KS Pannu, FDA commissioner, held a meeting on December 24 with the representatives of these companies and officials of the department to decide the next course of action. "The decision has been taken after the online food companies showed little interest. It is our duty to help consumers make informed choice about outlets from where they place food order online. We will not allow any firm to deliver food without getting the outlets rates," said Pannu. He added that a formal order will be issued shortly.

As per the norms laid down by FSSAI, each FBO will get score based on self-assessment questionnaire for compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures. Physical inspection and validation will be done by Food and Drug Administration, Punjab. As per level of compliance, hygiene rating will be given in the range of 0 to 5.