

FSSAI to finalise regulations for sale, promotion of ‘unhealthy’ products in schools soon

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will soon finalise its regulations that will restrict sale and advertisement of food products which are high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) inside school premises and within 50 metres from the school gates.

The food safety authority had released the draft of the regulations regarding sale of HFSS products in November last year. Sources said that the final notification is expected to clarify that the curbs on sale or promotion of HFSS food products will be implemented inside school premises and “within 50 metres from the school gate in any direction.”

Once implemented, the new regulations will make it mandatory for companies that market food products to children, to ensure that they depict and package food in reasonable portion and not encourage overeating.

Push for a balanced diet

The authority could also look at getting Municipal authorities and other relevant local authorities on-board to ensure compliance of the restrictions on sale and advertisement of unhealthy food inside and outside school premises, sources added. At the same time, State

governments may ask schools to set up committees which will include nutritionists and other experts for promotion of balanced diets.

As per the draft regulations, schools that are selling or catering school meals themselves will need to get registered as Food Business Operator with the State food safety authorities. Even catering companies that offer meals in schools will also need to register as FBOs. In addition, it was proposed that schools will ensure balanced diets are served in school canteens, mess and kitchens based on guidance from “Dietary guidelines for Indians – A Manual” issued by National Institute of Nutrition.

Eat Right Programme

FSSAI has been pushing schools to sensitise children on consumption of safe and healthy diets through its Eat Right School Programme. Over 40,000 schools have registered on FSSAI’s school platform and will work in collaboration with the food safety authority to become Eat Right Schools.

In 2015, the Delhi High Court had directed FSSAI to regulate sale of junk food in school premises after which an expert committee had submitted a report to the food safety authority on this issue.