

The Tribune

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

No stickers on fruits, veggies, orders food safety chief

Dec 6, 2018



Tribune News Service Ludhiana, December 4

The Food Safety Commissioner, Punjab, in a letter to all food safety teams, has directed them to spread awareness among traders that fruits and vegetables with stickers should not be sold in the market.

KS Pannu, Commissioner, said the use of stickers on food products to provide information on traceability, grades, price etc. was a common practice across the globe. But a lot of times, these stickers were applied directly on food items such as fruits and vegetables. “Apples, kiwis, mangoes, oranges, banana, pears and bell peppers are some common fruits and vegetables which have stickers applied directly on their surface,” he said.

“It is observed that in Punjab, traders use stickers to make their product look premium or sometimes to hide any defect on the food item. “Tested ok” and “good quality” are some common terms mentioned on the stickers, which do not have any significance at all,” said Pannu.

A wide variety of adhesives are used on these stickers. Studies show that substances like surfactants used in adhesives are toxic.

“People generally remove stickers from fruits and vegetables and consume without thinking about the residues of adhesives,” he said.

The food safety teams have been directed to check the sale of such fruits and vegetables and make the traders aware of the provisions the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, as per which no food business operator shall store, sell or distribute any food article which is unsafe. The teams have also been advised to inform the traders that “in case a sticker is a must to provide relevant information like grade, price or barcode as in case of sales in supermarkets, then stickers or labels should not be put directly on fruits and vegetables. Rather a functional barrier like a safe transparent thin film must be used and sticker should be pasted on them. The ink used on the stickers must be food grade quality and must not migrate into the food.”

Giving a word of caution to consumers, Pannu said fruits and vegetables with stickers were not necessarily of premium quality. “Consumers must check the quality before buying them, he said. Reiterating the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India advisory issued in this context, he said stickers should be removed before the consumption of fruits and vegetables. Consumers must remove the skin of fruits and vegetables and wash properly with water, he said.

Inspection at restaurants

A food safety team comprising Dr Andesh Kang, designated officer, and Yogesh Goyal and Robin Kumar, food safety officers, inspected Satta Bazaar on the Ferozpur road, Ludhiana, and found that it was using chicken powder in vegetable soups. The team also found expired sauce and vinegar bottles. The expired material was destroyed on the spot. The team seized two samples of cheese and curd. It also inspected another restaurant and collected three samples of tomato gravy, cheese and cinnamon. Garam Masala, another restaurant at Omaxe Mall, was also inspected and two samples of cheese and mineral water were collected.