



Will food safety guidelines for sweets come to force in Tamil Nadu from August 1?

26th July 2020



CHENNAI: Uncertainty looming large over implementation of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) direction that mandated display of date of manufacture and best before date for consumption for sweets from August 1 in Tamil Nadu.

After multiple extensions, FSSAI has fixed the deadline of August 1 for displaying date of manufacturing for sweets and also made it mandatory for them to be sold only in packets.

While traders have decided to seek one year exemption from implementing the FSSAI guidelines claiming huge financial loss on account of coronavirus induced lockdown and lack of alternatives in place of using plastic for packaging, consumer activists demand that the food regulator's order should be implemented letter and spirit at earliest.

The FSSAI said enforcement for display of 'date of manufacturing' and 'best before date' of non-packaged and loose sweets on their container or tray at the sales outlets should be followed from August 1 to October 1 this year.

During this period, sweet stalls should them in packets with mandatory instructions, said an official order.

"There are chances of using substandard materials for making sweets and sale of expired sweets as the shops remain closed for several days. At least, the expiry date of each

variant of sweets in outlets should be pasted in the tray in the glass containers," said an official from FSSAI.

But traders in Tamil Nadu, which has over 30,000 sweet shops, are facing massive difficulties in implementing these measures.

A M Vikrama Raja, President of Federation of Tamil Nadu Traders' Association, said it is nearly impossible to invest money for procuring alternative materials for plastic for packing the sweets given that over 90 percent of the shops are reeling under a financial crunch.

"There are some relaxations for using plastic above 51 microns due to lockdown. Complying with more restrictions during this time would increase the woes of traders," he said.

A few traders who are in the know said debts of traditional sweet stalls attached with hotels manifold during lockdown and 10 to 15 per cent shops expected to get closed permanently in another few months.

Raja said the operational cost for sweet stalls and hotels remained high, but earnings had fallen by 80 percent.

"Many small traders have decided to shut the hotels and sweet shops. Apart from the cost of the materials, migration of workers to northern States has played havoc in the business of major brands. On Monday, we will formally submit a request to be exempt from all the FSSAI regulations for at least one year." T Sadagopan, president of the Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumers' Centre said, "The order was issued a few years ago and it remained only on paper. Sweet stalls should not be given any further extensions.

"Sweets prepared using sub-standard or spoiled ingredients may put the consumer's life at risk at the time of pandemic. While sweet stalls in Kerala display FSSAI certificates and date of expiry for all the products, why can't the similar exercise be followed in Tamil Nadu," he asks.