

Norms limiting trans fats to 2% to be notified soon, Bakshi tells webinar

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Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi

FSS regulations limiting the industrially produced Trans Fatty Acids (TFAs) in all oils, fats and foods to 2% by weight will be notified soon, according to Dr Sunil Bakshi, head (regulations/Codex/international cooperation), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Though the pandemic and the lockdown slowed down the process little bit, he expressed confidence that as committed, India would eliminate trans fats by January 1, 2022.

He said, "The concerned regulation, the Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Additives) Regulations 2011 amended in 2019 is cleared by the scientific panel and the same will be notified soon."

Dr Bakshi was delivering the keynote address in a recent national webinar organised by CUTS International on 'Eliminating TFAs from India by 2022: Challenges and Way Forward'.

He also spoke about a range of regulatory interventions initiated in the last couple of years by FSSAI and various campaigns, enhanced surveillance and monitoring mechanism for food safety in India and updated the participants about using ground level evidence and primary research inputs in drafting the regulations related to TFAs.

George Cheriyan, director, CUTS International, in his opening remarks referring to a WHO study said that people with co-morbidity like Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs), are having six times more chances of getting infected by Corona virus and 12 times higher chance of losing their life. Even in normal situations, 61% of total deaths in India annually are attributed to NCDs.

He added that trans fat intake is responsible for increased CVDs and resulting in around 500,000 premature deaths globally.

He added that for every 2% energy of TFA consumption, the risk of heart attack or death from heart disease is increased by 25%, or in other words, every extra gram TFA consumed per day will increase the risk of heart attack or death by about 5%. Hence advocacy and efforts for Elimination of Trans Fats from India is crucial.

Those present on the occasion included Dr Eram Rao, associate professor (food technology) at Delhi University; Dr Rachita Gupta, national professional officer, Nutrition, WHO, Delhi; and Lopa Ghose, India country coordinator, Global Health Advocacy Incubator.

Meanwhile, the experts also discussed issues related to industries which need to follow all the regulations voluntarily or compulsorily and opined the need for capacity building of small and medium enterprises towards eliminating industrially produced TFAs. Also, the experts urged the authority to augment testing capability of the government labs, so that the surveillance and monitoring of food safety is enhanced and effective.