

Tax processed foods: FSSAI panel

Dated: 9 May, 2017

Pages: 3

'Ban ads promoting products high in fat, salt & sugar during children's TV shows'

A committee of medical experts and nutritionists has recommended a tax on "highly-processed" foods and sugar-sweetened beverages. The body, tasked by the Food Standards and Safety Authority of India (FSSAI), which is a Union Health Ministry body, has also advocated a ban on advertisements promoting foods high in FSS (fat, salt, sugar) during TV shows and channels aimed at children. "In fact, we should progress towards a total ban, as being done in a few other countries like Chile. Celebrity endorsements of such foods need to be discouraged," says the report on the FSSAI website.

WHO guidelines

The 11-member committee has compiled existing scientific literature on the consumption of fats, sodium and sugar in foods, across socio-economic groups in the country, and endorsed that the proportions of these food constituents not exceed guidelines by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

A salient finding was that Low Income Groups (LIG) reportedly consumed more fried snacks and sweets than High Income Groups (HIG) and, the highest consumption of bakery items was in slums, said a study on urban populations cited in the report.

Detailed labels must

The panel also recommended that all packaged food carry detailed labels specifying the energy value in kcal (kilo calories); the amounts of protein, carbohydrates and fat; and the amount of any other nutrient for which a nutrition or health claim is made. If relevant, the label should also specify the amount or type of fatty acids or the amount of cholesterol, saturated fatty acids, monounsaturated fatty acids and polyunsaturated fatty acids in gram (g) and

FSSAI IN NEWS

cholesterol in milligram (mg), the panel said. While many companies provide a breakdown on the nutritional constituents, they are not systematically enforced.

“Taxation is not within the remit of FSSAI,” Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, told *The Hindu*, “but several of these recommendations are being put in place.” The FSSAI is yet to enforce a long standing order that requires food companies to ensure no more than 5% of the daily calorie requirement of their products derives from fats.