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FSSAI finalizes guidelines to curb doping in sports

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FSSAI chief executive officer Pawan Kumar Agarwal. Photo: Pradeep Gaur/Mint

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New Delhi: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Tuesday finalized guidelines to curb the use of prohibited performance-enhancing substances in nutritional supplements by sports professionals.

The country's food regulator will now regulate both offline and online retailers, importers and manufacturers to ensure that doping substances are not present in food, beverages and nutritional supplements sold off the shelf, the regulator said in the guidance document on the use of supplements for sports persons. *Mint* has seen a copy of the document. Besides trying to squeeze the availability of products that could have possible doping substances, the food regulator has specified what sports persons should not consume to avoid possible doping. "The primary purpose of the guidance document on the use of supplements or products intended for sports person is an attempt to provide information not only on the use but also about the labelling and claims for the products. The stakeholders are ranging from sports persons to supplement manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers and general public who will use the information provided in the document," FSSAI noted.

In the guidance document, FSSAI has outlined requirements for manufacturers, retailers and importers regarding requirement of registration and licensing with the regulator, label and claims, authenticity, traceability and date marking. Companies engaged in the business must comply with the methods issued by Canada-headquartered World Anti Doping Agency (Wada) which is revised every year.

"The manufacturers must comply with food safety and standards regulations on labelling, packaging, claims and advertisement with regard to labels, claims and packaging of the health supplements," noted FSSAI. The need for regulating food products from possible use of doping substances came after Wada, in its doping violation report for 2015, ranked India third after the Russian Federation and Italy. In 2015, 117 athletes failed to clear dope tests. The food regulator has finalized the norms based on suggestions of a working group consisting of representatives from National Anti-Doping Agency (Nada), Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Narcotics Control Bureau, among others.

The Indian government had, in 2013, drafted the National Sports Development Bill that highlighted elimination of doping practices. As per a 27 April 2017 report in *The Indian Express*, the government has been working on a new legislation to make doping by athletes a criminal offence and the

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proposed law could include coaches, manufacturers and suppliers of these products.

FSSAI on 15 September 2017 signed a five-year agreement with Nada to develop capacities at its laboratories to test for the presence of restricted or prohibited substances in food and nutritional supplements.