

Move to cut trans-fats in edible oils

NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Friday said it plans to bring down the trans-fatty acids (TFA) content in edible oils and vanaspati to 2 per cent from the current 5 per cent in a phased manner by 2022. The decision was taken after the food safety authority held a meeting with vanaspati and edible oil manufacturers, public health experts besides other stakeholders on Thursday. “FSSAI has in principle decided to bring down the trans-fatty acids (TFA) in vanaspati /bakery shortenings/margarine to less than 2 per cent in a phased manner, that would effectively bring the level of trans fats to zero level in food in India,” it said in a statement. The announcement is significant as last month, WHO urged countries to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat from the food supply by 2023.

In a statement, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said, “Through this, we are planning to achieve less than 2 per cent TFA content by 2022, a year ahead of the global target to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat from the food supply by the year 2023. We hope that this initiative will drive the market for trans-fat free products in the future.”

He added that the TFA reduction in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs) from 5 per cent to 2 per cent will be carried out in a phased manner by the industry. “The industry would come on board by signing the agreement to reduce industrially-produced TFA content in fats/oils to less than 2 per cent by 2022. The FSSAI commits to facilitate industries in capacity building for the smooth transition,” he added.

With the consensus developed on less than 2 per cent level of TFA in fats/oils, this would now be taken up by the food authority for necessary approval and a draft will be notified soon. The final regulation is likely to be notified in the next 3-4 months.

Many countries around the world, such as Denmark, Chile, Norway, Singapore, South Africa and Equador already limit trans-fat in all foods to 2 per cent, while a few other countries such as Austria, Hungary and Latvia limit it to 2 per cent level with some exceptions.