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**E-paper**

## **Food safety regulator looking at stricter penalty for offenders**

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**PRIYA SHETH**

India's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Association of India, is looking to amend the standards for food items to tightening the noose around offending food business operators, including manufacturers, sellers and distributors, sources said.

The FSSAI is looking to amend the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, in order to revise the penalty structure, meaning the penalty and punishments that will be given to offenders will be significantly stricter than they are at present.

For instance, under the current structure, the penalty for selling misbranded or sub-standard food stands at between Rs 3-5 lakh.

Penalty in this bracket is likely to be hiked significantly. There are some changes that the authority is working on with regards to punishment as well. Businesses caught selling unsafe food resulting in both death-like situation and death could receive life imprisonment and an increase in fine.

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At present, the punishment for unsafe food resulting in death is life imprisonment and Rs 10 lakh fine and the punishment for unsafe food resulting in grievous injury or death-like situation is imprisonment of 6 years and Rs 5 lakh fine.

This revision in penalty structure comes at a time when food adulteration rates in India are still significantly high.

Data sourced from FSSAI annual reports shows that, food adulteration rate in India has almost doubled over the last 5 years. Food adulteration rate in India stood at 23% in 2016-17 compared to 13% in 2011-12.

The final contours of the penalty & punishment structure are still being finalised at this point. These changes proposed by the FSSAI could take about 4-6 months to come into effect.