

FSSAI wants calorie count on restaurant menu to promote healthy habits

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India's food regulator has asked restaurants to voluntarily print calorie counts on their menus to promote healthy eating habits, as is done in the west, but they say it will be a challenge as recipes are not standardised and ingredient quantities keep changing. The authority has also asked e-commerce and retail companies to promote healthy options such as fortified foods on their landing pages and checkout counters.

"This is a way to nudge food companies to do something which is in the interest of the health of the nation," said Pawan Agarwal, chief executive of the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI), adding that it was a part of its Eat Right Movement. This will include commitments from food companies on reformulation of their products with less salt and sugar besides elimination of trans fats in a phased manner.

Restaurants will be required to promote safe and healthy eating practices and help consumers in making informed choices through calorie information labelling. They will also be required to voluntarily include low fat, salt and sugar variants on the menu. It will be a stiff challenge to assign calories to dishes, said representatives of restaurants and food chains across the country.

"The recipes of dishes on the menu in a restaurant are not standardised, so it will be a huge challenge to mention **calorie count** of dishes on the menu," said National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) secretary general Prakul Kumar, adding that the quantity of ingredients in the same dish may vary from day to day.

The authority has also asked packaged food companies to commit to reducing sugar, unhealthy fats and salt in a phased manner. "Big food companies including Nestle, ITC, **Patanjali**, big quick service restaurant (QSR) chains (including halwai associations), major organised retailers and ecommerce players including Big-Basket, Amazon Grofers will make a simple commitment and sign a pledge to promote healthy eating," Agarwal said.

Albinder Dhindsa, co-founder Grofers, said the company will promote FSSAI's eating right initiative through a dedicated collection and store. "we are committed to promoting healthy food on our platforms. We will welcome and support every step taken towards raising public awareness on issues at the grass root level," he added.

The food regulator has also proposed to limit the maximum trans fat content in vegetable oils, vegetable fat and hydrogenated vegetable oil to 2% by weight as part of its goal to make India trans fat-free by 2022.



The regulator has invited the top food companies, QSR chains, oil companies and organised retailers to join the self-regulation exercise.