



Centre for Science and Environment

CSE welcomes FSSAI's proposed food labelling law

Dated: - 15th July 2019 (Monday)

E-Paper

New Delhi, July 15, 2019: Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has welcomed the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) recently introduced draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019. The draft (put out for comments on the FSSAI website on July 2, 2019), when adopted, will supersede the existing Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.

“This is a big step, which will enable people to identify unhealthy foods that are high in fats, sugar or salt. It should help to contain the growing incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases,” said Sunita Narain, director general, CSE.

The draft proposes to mandatorily declare quantity of salt, added sugar, saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol. The draft further proposes that labels must comprise information on serving size and per serve percentage contribution of a particular nutrient to the recommended dietary allowance (RDA). ‘Serving size’ suggests the quantity of a food product customarily consumed. RDA is recommended maximum daily intake of salt, sugar and fats. Beyond this, the daily diet is considered unhealthy.

“Labelling salt, sugar and fat content mandatorily is a big step as diabetes and hypertension is a household phenomenon in the country. These ingredients are very high in packaged foods and are typically not disclosed leading to unhealthy eating habits,” said Chandra Bhushan, deputy director general, CSE.

The most important part of the draft rules is the Front-of-Pack (FoP) labelling and ‘red-coloured’ warning symbol to help identify foods high in calories, saturated fats, trans fats, added sugar and salt. The proposed FoP label will depict information on number of calories and quantity of salt, added sugar and fats per serve. The label will also include how much of the RDA is exhausted by eating one serve of the packaged food. If salt, added sugar and fats in a packaged food exceeds a certain threshold level, the red warning symbol will appear on the package.

“Red-coloured warning symbol is a very powerful approach to help consumers identify junk foods. It is a much needed intervention for India as it will help overcome literacy and language barriers,” said Amit Khurana, programme director, food safety and toxins, CSE

CSE researchers who have been pushing for these necessary food labelling regulations are appreciative of the fact that junk food served at fast food outlets is also under the purview of this draft and that advertisement of junk food products will not be allowed to target children.

CSE, however, has also given the following recommendations to FSSAI to improve the draft regulations:

- FoP labels should reflect total sugar instead of added sugar and total fats instead of saturated fats -- else only a part of the problem will be addressed.
- ‘Sodium’ should be replaced with ‘salt’ as it is easier to understand by the general public.
- Serving size should be standardised for effective compliance.

“The draft law, when adopted, would prove to be a milestone in Indian food safety regulations. We hope that the food industry will support this law. We are urging FSSAI to notify these regulations as soon as possible.” said Bhushan.