

**Ensure food safety in arecanut imports: FSSAI orders officers**

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**E-paper**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided that all areca nut (popular as betel nut here) imports will be subjected to tests, in a bid to ensure compliance with food safety standards in such consignments before they are given clearance at customs.

The FSSAI has directed its authorised officers to ensure that all imported betelnut consignments are subjected to “100 per cent sampling and testing” rather than giving clearance on the basis of self-assessment declarations submitted by importers.



In an order, it noted that betelnut, which is the fruit of the areca palm, is prone to formation of fungal growth during production, storage and transportation.

“Accordingly, it has been decided that the consignments of imported betel/areca nut shall not be cleared through Risk Management System (RMS) and all the imported consignments shall be subjected to 100 per cent sampling and testing,” it said.

Under the RMS mechanism, imported goods get clearance on the basis of self assessment declarations presented by the importers. Most such consignments are selected for “no assessment and examination” and are only subjected to random checks by the authorised officers.

FSSAI has prescribed standards for areca/betel nut in its Food Safety and Standards (Food Products standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011. In addition, FSSAI had last year set limits of aflatoxin in arecanut through an amendment in the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins & Residues) Regulations, 2011.

It has also advised its authorised officers to be vigilant and strictly ensure compliance with Food Safety and Standards Regulations before giving clearance to imported betelnut consignments.