

FSSAI to clamp down on fake ripening

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The regulator said that artificial ripening of fruits using prohibited substances poses a serious threat to the health of consumers.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in state is on the lookout for cases of artificially ripened mangoes.

Mumbai: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will initiate effective surveillance and enforcement activities to rule out any possibility of artificial ripening of fruits with harmful and banned substances like calcium carbide or acetylene gas.

The regulator said that artificial ripening of fruits using prohibited substances poses a serious threat to the health of consumers. Keeping in mind the rampant use of banned calcium carbide and non-availability of an alternative ripening agent, the FSSAI has instead permitted the use of ethylene for ripening of fruits since 2016.

All states and Union territories have been directed by the FSSAI to initiate a strict drive against artificial ripening of fruits with harmful and banned substances like calcium carbide or acetylene gas.

The regulator stated in the order, "The commissioners of food safety of all states/UTs are hereby directed to initiate effective surveillance and enforcement activities to rule out any possibility of ripening the fruits with the aid of harmful & banned substances viz. calcium carbide or acetylene gas. They are also advised to do a similar exercise for vegetables to check the level of pesticides."

Although strictly prohibited under the food law, calcium carbide and acetylene gas, popularly known as "masala" are widely used for easy ripening of fruits like mango, papaya, banana and melons. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in state is on the lookout for cases of artificially ripened mangoes.

A senior FDA officer said, "We have received notifications and we've been acting on such things since the past. This year, we are tightening all the ways in which these fruit vendors are selling their goods in the market."