

‘Red labelling’ proposal put on hold; expert panel to examine plan

Food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has shelved a proposal that called for red labelling of packaged food products containing high levels of fat, sugar and

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NEW DELHI: Food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has shelved a proposal that called for red labelling of packaged food products containing high levels of fat, sugar and salt, according to its CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal. Agarwal, who was addressing a national consultation on the draft regulation organised by the CUTS International, said that while the pre-draft for the proposal was ready and sent to the Health Ministry, “there were concerns expressed by some stakeholders.”

“We have kept it on hold for the time being and a group of experts from health and nutrition background has been set up to look into the issue of labelling once again,” he said. FSSAI had come out with the draft of Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2018 that proposed mandatory red-label marking on such packaged food in April.

The expert panel will be headed by B Sesikeran, former director of National Institute of Nutrition, as well as the current director Hemalatha, besides Dr Nikhil Tandon. According to Agarwal, the panel will study in detail the industry’s concerns and make recommendations. “May be a little bit of tweaking (to the draft regulations) is required. We are open to it without compromising the basic directions of the labelling regulations,” Agarwal said.

Pitching for bringing in strong labelling norms at the earliest, the FSSAI CEO said it is difficult to ask consumers to change their eating habits as some eat mindlessly, while some cannot differentiate between healthy and unhealthy food products. “In this situation, I feel we can make a dent if we can address it at the supply side by asking companies to adhere to the labelling norms,” Agarwal added.