

Ban on Chinese milk products till FSSAI can detect melamine

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Pune: The ban on import of milk and milk products from China has been extended across the country.

The banned items include chocolate and chocolate products, candies, confectionery and food preparations with milk and milk solids as an ingredient. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the country's food regulatory body, issued a notification in this regard on April 23.

The import of milk and milk products from China was banned in the country in 2008 as melamine, an industrial chemical that could prove to be harmful on consumption, was found in some imported products. The FSSAI has been extending the ban in the country every year since 2008.

"The issue was reviewed at a FSSAI meeting held on April 5 with the concerned departments/ministries and it was recommended that the ban on import of milk and milk products from China be extended until the capacity of all laboratories at ports of entry has been suitably upgraded to test melamine," reads the FSSAI notification.

The ban was first imposed in the country in 2008 after it was found that melamine was present in some dairy products imported from China.

Subsequently, the ban was extended through various notifications, the last being issued last year on December 24.

Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) officials here have reiterated that they would initiate strict action against those found selling Chinese milk products in and around the city. "The ban has been in force since September 2008 and has been extended periodically. Action will be initiated against those found selling the banned products," said Suresh Deshmukh, joint commissioner (food), FDA, Pune division.

"Chinese dairy farmers were using melamine to increase the profit margin. First, they diluted milk by 30% and then added melamine to increase its protein content. Quality-control equipment that we have is designed to detect nitrogen, not melamine. Hence upgradation of laboratories at port entry level is felt strongly," said Dilip Sangat, assistant commissioner (food), FDA, Raigad district.