



ADOPT SELF-REGULATION: FSSAI TO NUTRACEUTICALS INDUSTRY

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Food safety regulator FSSAI on Wednesday said there was still confusion among consumers about nutraceuticals because of misinformation, and called for adoption of self-regulation by industry players.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India Chairman Ashish Bahuguna said the industry had bigger responsibility to ensure quality and safe products to consumers.

Nutraceuticals are product of food origin with extra health benefits in addition to the basic nutritional value of the food. These can be viewed as non-specific biological therapies that promote general health, control symptoms and prevent malignant processes.

Addressing an Assocham event here, Bahuguna said, "Everyone expects the acceptability of nutraceuticals to grow. I feel the first challenge is that consumers have bhram (confusion). There is so much misinformation."

There are also false claims about the products. The consumers want claims on labels to be clear. The industry should clarify the difference between nutraceuticals and pharmaceuticals, he said asking the industry to work in this direction.

Consumer interest and safety should be the priority for the industry, for which it should adopt self-regulation, he added. Bahuguna further said, "FSSAI makes stringent rules that no one violates. Manufacturers have bigger responsibility to make quality and safe products." Nutraceuticals sector is growing fast and will grow faster in the coming years. FSSAI is open to accepting suggestions to improve the sector, he added.

Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey, National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship & Management (NIFTEM) Vice-Chancellor Chindi Vasudevappa were among other industry players present at the event.

Highlighting the challenges faced in the sector, Sami-Sabinsa Group founder and chairman Muhammed Majeed said the industry should be worried about herbal security as the country cannot depend on other nations like Indonesia for regular supply. "In Ayurveda, if you don't get one herb, it is adulterated with other. Even in nutraceuticals, it happens. Therefore, herbal security is important," he said.

Majeed also said India should patent new products else other countries would do so, affecting the domestic industry.

Health Foods and Dietary Supplements Association president Ajit Singh said the domestic industry had many problems with regard to packaging and hygiene. The nutraceuticals industry

is forced to make products from equipment and processes designed by pharma industry. "We need to redesign equipment for nutraceuticals," he said.

Another problem is the way that nutraceuticals are packed. They are packed in plastics that reduce the quality of dosages each time the bottle is opened, he said and suggested blister packaging.

According to an Assocham Knowledge report, the Indian nutraceuticals market is expected to grow from USD 4 billion in 2017 to USD 18 billion in 2025. Key global players in this sector include GSK Consumer Healthcare, HUL, Nestle, Danone, Kellogg's and Amway. Indian companies like ITC, Dabur, Himalaya, Patanjali and Baidyanath are trying to reach out to customers by introducing new products in the market. With emergence of new companies like Sami Labs, Tirupati Group, Deccan Healthcare and Vantage Nutrition, the market for nutraceuticals looks promising, the report said.