

FSSAI relaxes certification norms for small organic food producers

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Relaxation to be valid until April 1, 2020

In a move that is expected to bring relief to small organic food producers, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to relax certification norms for small original producers or producer organisations with an annual turnover of up to ₹12 lakh till April 1, 2020.

According to the regulations, all organic food sold in the country needs to be certified either under National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) or Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India).

The food safety authority has now directed State food safety officers to consider the organic food regulations as “Enabling Regulations” and not for prosecution — particularly for small original producers and producer organisation during the initial phase of its implementation till April 1, 2020.

“Provision of direct sales of organic food to the end consumer by the small original producer/producer organisation having an annual turnover of organic produce of not more than ₹12 lakh is permitted. They may be allowed to sell organic food without any certification i.e NPOP/PGS-India,” FSSAI said.

Breather for aggregators

The regulator also decided to relax certification norms for aggregators or intermediaries that may have organic produce sales turnover not exceeding ₹50 lakh per annum. This is being done since it is not viable for small producers to directly sell small quantities of organic food to consumers and they need to rely on aggregators or intermediaries. These small organic producers and aggregators shall not bear the Javik Bharat logo, the regulator added.

“Such aggregators/intermediaries shall have a turnover of organic produce not more than ₹50 lakh per annum and they may be allowed to sell without any certification i.e NPOP /PGS-India,” FSSAI said.

FSSAI said this decision was taken after careful evaluation of the representations it has received regarding challenges being faced in the implementation of the organic food regulations. “One of the challenges is that there are large number of producers and producer organisations in the country who are not yet certified under any of the two systems of certifications. Efforts are under way for simplification of PGS-India to make it small producer -friendly,” it added.

However, FSSAI stressed that these relaxations do not apply to organic food retail companies. It also asked state food safety officers to ensure that the organic food producers are in compliance with the limits of contaminants and insecticide residue in line with the regulations.

The new regulations for organic food were notified in December 2017, and all organic food businesses were given time till July 1, 2018 to comply with the norms. Food businesses handling, manufacturing or processing organic food were asked to obtain necessary licenses by September 30, 2018 and the norms regarding implementation of FSSAI’s organic food logo-Javik Bharat came into effect from April 1.