

FSSAI gearing up for pkg regulations, slated to be effective from July

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The FSSAI is gearing up for the implementation of new packaging regulations, which shall come into force from July 1, 2019.

According to experts, implementation of these regulations would require integrated efforts from all stakeholders, particularly the chemical industry, which forms the base for many of the requirements under the new FSS Packaging Regulations that are slated to replace the 2011 Regulations.

Avers an industry insider, approach at the moment appears shallow with only commitment coming from the brand owners or FBOs but the percolation of information down to all stakeholders is still missing as implementation of these regulations will require the integrated efforts from all the stakeholders of the packaging supply chain including ink manufacturers, substrate manufacturers as well as converters.

“FSSAI has made brand owners responsible for ensuring the food safety aspects of their packaging materials. And hence , brand owners needs to interpret, understand the regulations and have to align the entire supply chain with the same interpretation. Here, we need to understand the fact that the role of brand owners in cascading the information is extremely critical as stakeholders in packaging supply chain are experts in their fields, but are not experts in understanding food safety and interpreting the FSSAI regulations,” the industry insider said.

He, however, opined that with some handholding from brand owners (which is missing currently), the packaging supply chain will be able to comply with FSSAI norms.

The new packaging regulations would certainly raise the bar of food safety in India to the next level, however.

Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs, a leading food, air and water testing company, said, “The guidelines take into account the carcinogenic effect of newsprint ink and dyes on human life. The possibility of printing inks containing harmful colours, pigmentation, binders, additives, and preservatives is quite high.”

“Besides, the presence of pathogenic micro-organisms used in the newspaper also poses a high risk to human health. The study, conducted by FSSAI in collaboration with the Indian

Institute of Packaging (IIP), Mumbai and the National Test House, Kolkata, concluded that the food samples collected from the unorganised sector, such as small eateries, tea stalls, etc., where piping hot food is served in newspapers, plastic sheets and recycled sheets, among others, were contaminated by the packaging materials,” he added.

The official, however, said that the unorganised sector will be monitored closely, as a challenge.

Packaging has a primary function of protecting the food. If it is not regulated, It can actually make the food unsafe due to the migration of contaminants which can transfer from the printed packaging article to the food itself.

The new regulation aims to adopt standards which will regulate different packaging components such as plastics, glass, paper, printing inks, etc. across the packaging supply chain.

Experts feel that these standards will also bridge the gap between regulations across the globe, and therefore, will deploy more opportunities for export. Above all, the standards are intended to improve consumer safety.

“And the standards will evolve with time with the increase of awareness levels, the capabilities of the packaging supply chain partners and the evolution of robust enforcement measures in India,” said industry insiders.