

October 23, 2018

Imported pulses to be tested for glyphosate contamination

[MEENAKSHI VERMA AMBWANI](#)



NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 23

In order to address a lacunae in food-safety regulations, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed its imports division to test glyphosate levels in imported pulses in line with global standards.

Noting that the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) for glyphosate in pulses has not been specified in regulations in India, it has said that MRL specified in Codex standards should be taken into consideration while giving import clearances.

The recent FSSAI order assumed significance as a US court on Monday upheld that glyphosate was a potential carcinogen. Refusing to entertain a fresh trial sought by Monsanto (now owned by Bayer), a superior San Francisco court upheld a jury trial awarding compensation to a former school groundskeeper, who claimed that spraying of glyphosate caused him cancer. The court, however, reduced the punitive award to him substantially.

Codex Alimentarius is the joint food standards programme of FAO and WHO and is a collection of internationally recognised standards and practices for food products. Glyphosate is prevalently used as a herbicide.

Speaking to *BusinessLine*, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said: "Since we haven't specified standards for maximum residue levels for glyphosate for pulses, the impression was that any amount of residue levels is allowed in pulses. Hence, we have decided to follow the Codex standards." Different crops have different glyphosate MRL standards, he added.

FSSAI has also directed its regional offices to collect data on the glyphosate levels in imported pulses and submit the data to its headquarters on a fortnightly basis. Kavitha Kuruganthi, a farm activist, welcomed the move, but said the weed-killer is used indiscriminately in many crops, including some for which its application is not approved. Codex standards specify glyphosate MRL for beans, lentil, peas and soyabean on a per kg basis. The maximum residue levels range from 2 mg/kg in beans to 20 mg/kg in soyabean.