

Inc 42

Food Regulator FSSAI Steps Up Scrutiny For Ecommerce Food Companies

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E-paper

The national food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued revised guidelines to step up scrutiny of ecommerce food companies saying that there can be no compromise on last-mile delivery and safety of food products. The new guidelines note that the food products offered for sale are liable to sampling at any point in the supply chain. Also, companies will also need to provide an indicative image of the food on their platforms so that consumers can recognise the product. The food regulator emphasised that all mandatory information mentioned in the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act will also have to be provided to consumers before purchase and only fresh food should be delivered to consumers.



FSSAI Chief Executive Pawan Agarwal reportedly said, “With increasing use of ecommerce platforms by consumers, the guidelines are aimed at stepping up vigilance on the safety of food provided to consumers. These guidelines will help in building confidence in the ecommerce food business sector and increase its credibility.” The guidelines came in as a part of directives issued by the regulator to re-operationalise licensing and registration of ecommerce food companies. Food should have a remaining shelf

life of 30% or 45 days before expiry at the time of delivery, the guidelines said. Also, according to the guidelines, food business operators need to ensure that the last-mile delivery is undertaken by trained personnel and that the safety of food products is not compromised at the time of delivery. The revised guidelines directly impact online food and grocery operators such as Amazon Pantry, Grofers and BigBasket as well as food delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato. The companies have been working to create greater efficiencies in supply chain and technology, cutting costs and doing away with unprofitable products.

A Swiggy spokesperson told *Inc42*, “Swiggy has been a strong proponent of every measure and guideline that prioritises food safety and hygiene. Earlier in the year, in full compliance of Food Safety and Standards Act and Rules, all unregistered restaurants were disabled from Swiggy.” The company said it is committed to working with the restaurant partner community and FSSAI to bring the necessary confidence and control to ensure there is no compromise in last-mile delivery and safety of food. The revised guidelines come soon after social media outrage about a Zomato delivery man was seen eating out of packed food container. Since then, the company has announced plans to introduce tamper-proof tapes and has already suspended the delivery personnel. However, the commotion has caused much trouble for Zomato as well as other food delivery companies. Zomato spokesperson told *Inc42*, “We welcome any move by FSSAI which will help us make the restaurant industry safer for consumers. We provide last mile delivery to our users and are taking stringent steps to ensure the safety of food. While we are already compliant with the mandatory directives in the FSS act, we will work with FSSAI on any measures required to drive the development in the ecosystem.” FSSAI had earlier asked the online food delivery platforms to remove those food business operators (FBOs) that didn't have a license obtained from the regulator. Online grocery companies have already been facing challenges of delivering quality products within the stipulated time of hyperlocal deliveries. With FSSAI order coming in to mandate safety and quality of deliveries, food ecommerce companies will have to maintain a high quality in deliveries.