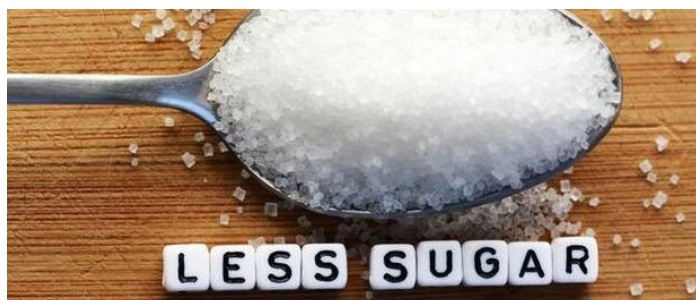


Cutting down on sugar: FSSAI eases soluble solid norms for fruit-based drinks

September 06, 2019



Move will amplify Eat Right India initiative

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In a move that will enable companies to launch fruit-based beverages with lower sugar content, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to remove the mandatory requirement of minimum percentage of total soluble solids (TSS) in fruit nectars, fruit drinks and carbonated fruit beverages.

TSS norms

TSS is a parameter that measures the sugar content in fruits and beverages.

This is one of the regulatory steps that FSSAI is taking to amplify its Eat Right India initiative.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said that this will enable companies to reformulate their existing products. "It will also encourage development of products with lower amount of TSS, allowing them to restrict addition of sugar to these products," he added.

Beverage industry executives said that so far "legacy" TSS norms for fruit-based beverages were posing to be an impediment to come out with lower sugar products. In a bid to meet the TSS requirement, companies had to add sugar to fruit drinks, nectars and fruit-based

carbonated beverages beyond naturally occurring sugars, a senior industry executive pointed out.

Almost all the key beverage companies such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Dabur are working on reducing sugar levels in their existing products and looking to launch new products with lower sugar levels.

Labelling & packaging

Agarwal also said that FSSAI is reviewing the labelling provisions to promote judicious use of sweeteners in food products and facilitating availability of such products for consumers.

Over the last one year, the food safety authority has been taking various regulatory measures in line with its Eat Right India movement, which is aligned with the government's public outreach programmes such as Poshan Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukta Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission. The FSSAI is in the process of finalising front-of-the-pack nutrition labelling for packaged food products and school food regulations. Food fortification standards for staples and regulations to check on misleading claims by packaged food companies have already been notified.

Norms for reducing trans-fatty acids in edible oils, vanaspathi and industrial margarine to less than 2 per cent by 2022 have also been notified.

In addition, the authority is looking at introducing regulations that will make menu-labelling mandatory for large restaurant players.

Speaking at an event to launch a mass media campaign for the initiative, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that given the rise in non-communicable diseases, there is a need to amplify the key message of Eat Right India movement.