

FSSAI issues draft notification for regulating food sold to school kids

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Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a draft notification for regulating the food sold to school children in school canteens and periphery.

Called the Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and Healthy Diets for School Children) Regulations, 2019, these regulations are based on FSSAI's 10-point charter for food sold, supplied to school children.

As per the norms, the FSSAI has sought a prohibition on sale of food commonly called as 'junk food' to school children.

The apex food regulator has said that foods which are referred to as foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) cannot be sold to school children in school canteens/ mess premises/ hostel kitchens or within 50 metre of the school campus.

In regard to the new regulations, a senior official with the FSSAI, revealed, "With the aim to ensure safe and wholesome food for school children, FSSAI has proposed a draft regulation titled Food Safety and Standards (Safe Food and Healthy Diets for School Children) Regulations, 2019. At the heart of these regulations is a fundamental idea to make it clear what is healthy for children and what is not."

The draft regulations have provisions about responsibilities of school authority to ensure safe food and healthy diets on school premises, promotion of safe and healthy foods in and around the school premises, food marketing and advertisement to school children, and monitoring & surveillance.

The draft also talks about general guidance for providing safe and wholesome food to children in which the food is divided into three categories. The Eat Adequately category which will include 70-80% food of the menu, Eat Moderately category which includes packaged food and other similar stuff to be eaten occasionally in small portions and third was Eat Sparingly which includes HFSS food and regulation says it should be discouraged.

FSSAI has also decided to urge the state governments to frame healthy diets for school children in accordance with the general guidance given in this regulation.

Ten-point charter of the regulation
1. The school authority itself/FBOs contracted by school authority selling or catering school

meals and FBOs contracted by Department of School Education for operation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme must obtain a registration or licence as applicable and comply with the requirements of sanitary and hygienic practices to the food service establishments as specified under Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011.

2. Foods which are referred to as foods high in fat, salt and sugar cannot be sold to school children in school canteens/ mess premises/ hostel kitchens or within 50 metre of the school campus.

3. Encourage schools to adopt a comprehensive programme for promoting safe food and healthy diets amongst school children, and to convert school campus into Eat Right School focussing safe and healthy food, local and seasonal food and no food waste as per the specified benchmarks.

4. Encourage School Authority to promote consumption of a safe and balanced diet in the school as per the guidelines issued by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).

5. The School Authority shall ensure that FBOs supplying prepared meals in the premises are on the basis of general guidance provided in the regulation and as per the direction issued by the food authority or the commissioners of food safety.

6. Nutritionists, dietitians may be engaged by the school authority to assist in the preparation of menu for the children, periodically.

7. FBOs manufacturing HFSS food products barred from advertising such foods to children in school premises or within 50 metre of the school campus.

8. FBOs to support healthy eating in schools and not market, sell, or give away low nutrition foods anywhere on school campus, including through logos, brand names, posters, textbook covers etc.

9. Regular inspection of premises to ensure that safe, healthy and hygienic food is served to students.

10. Creating a sub-committee by the State Level Advisory Committee to monitor the implementation of this regulation and to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food to school children.

FSSAI has invited suggestions and objections from stakeholders within 30 days from the publication of the draft regulations. These regulations, after consideration of stakeholder comments and finalisation, would be finalised for implementation.