

FSSAI to lay down norms to curb reach of unhealthy food to school kids

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In a move to curb the unhealthy diets' reach to the school children, FSSAI has decided to put in place protocols to regulate the sale of food in the vicinity of a school.

The country's apex food regulator is working on a draft that will prohibit the sale of such unhealthy food within a radius of nearly 50m of schools.

At an ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) event in New Delhi, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, said that the food regulator was coming up with draft regulations on healthy diets for school children. *"In the draft regulation for safe, wholesome and nutritious food for school children, FSSAI has proposed to impose curbs on advertising, promotion and endorsement of food products that are not healthy in school premises and within 50-meter radius of school, while earlier it was only about availability in school canteens,"* he added.

It is pertinent to mention here that three years ago, Delhi High Court had asked FSSAI to come out with regulations on healthy diets for school children. Agarwal said that since then, the regulator had been working on the subject, and finally, the apex regulator has decided to put out a draft for the same.

However, the subject matter related to definition of healthy diets also need a clarification. The FSSAI chief said, "How do you define healthy diets, that is at the heart of that regulation? We had to have metrics that define healthy foods, fairly objectively. Now we are coming up with draft regulations and those will also be put in place."

Meanwhile, FSSAI has also put out a draft, for ensuring safe and wholesome food for school children, namely Food Safety and Standards (Safe and Wholesome Food for School Children) Regulations, 2018.

The proposed draft regulation talks about the categorisation of menus at school canteens on basis of colour coding as green (comprising mostly fresh food), yellow (comprising packaged food) and red (comprising food high in salt, sugar and fat).

The draft also stated that the foods and beverages categorised as green or yellow may be included on the school menu and reviewed by the School Health and Wellness Team on a periodic basis with a focus to continuously improve the safety and nutritious quality of foods served in schools.