

FSSAI issues draft notification about amendments in sharbat, syrup stds

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FSSAI has released a gazette draft notification for the amendment in the existing standards of synthetic syrup and sharbat, claiming that it would bring more clarity among the two products.

According to the new standards, sharbat shall contain a minimum of 25 per cent of juice or an extract of fruit, vegetable, nut, herb, flower, spice, alone or in combination. It is 10 per cent under the current standards.

In a statement, the country's apex food regulator said that these standards also provided an opportunity to formulate the synthetic syrup with low total soluble solids (TSS) up to 30 per cent vis-a vis the current level of 65 per cent.

Low TSS are accommodated in view of the increasing awareness of consumer for health and preference towards low sugar, and it is pertinent to note that the amount of TSS is a direct indication of amount of sugar in such products.

"Further, the word sharbat and synthetic syrup mentioned under Regulation 2.3.21 of the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011, relating to standards for squashes, crushes, fruit syrups/fruit sharbats and barley water would mislead the consumer, and hence, the same have been removed from the said regulation," the statement added.

FSSAI stated that several comments were received from the stakeholders on the proposed draft at the pre-draft stage, but at that time, the file had already been referred to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for approval. These comments would be considered at the time of post-draft consultation for the finalisation of the said draft notification.

Also, the regulator had invited suggestions and objections within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of the draft amendment regulations, which will come into force on the date of their final publication in the Official Gazette.

However, the industry seemed to differ with the FSSAI, and industry experts stated that

on the pre-draft notification related to Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Amendment Regulation 2018 relating to the revision of the standards of Synthetic Syrup and Sharbat, the food industry had sent objections and suggestions to the chief executive officer, FSSAI.

“It appears that these suggestions have been thrown in the waste paper basket, as again on the same subject, the same draft notification has been issued on March 12, 2019 (and published in the Gazette of India on March 15, 2019), asking for objections or suggestions within a period of 30 days. Is asking for objections or suggestions, just an eyewash to complete the formality only if FSSAI does not intend to implement the suggestions made by the industry,” rued an industry insider.

The experts suggested that someone from FSSAI justify the reason for re-insisting on their draft specifications, when it has been repeatedly represented that these time-tried existing standards of synthetic syrup or sharbat remain as they are.