

FSSAI issues guidance note to ensure purchase of unadulterated spices

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E-Paper

FSSAI, the country's apex food regulator, has issued a guidance note on spices to guide consumers on avoiding the purchase of adulterated products. Titled Safe Ground Spices - How to ensure that they are not adulterated, it contained the key takeaway points that must be kept in mind while buying spices.

These include avoiding the purchase of powdered spices in the loose form (which FSSAI has banned on account of the high probability of adulteration); looking for the AGMARK logo and certification on ground spices, and checking for the FSSAI license number of the label of the package. It is not uncommon for ground spices to be adulterated with artificial colours, starch, chalk powder, etc., in order to increase their weight and enhance their appearance. The consumption of adulterated spices can cause a number of diseases, including skin allergies, liver disorders, etc. Consumers were instructed to purchase whole spices, as the chances of adulteration in them are generally lower than they are in ground spices, and look for the FSSAI organic logo - Jaivik Bharat - on the pack while purchasing organic spices. Moreover, FSSAI's guidance note provided the way to detect adulteration in ground spices at home and the instructions to report the sale of ground spices in the loose form and adulteration to the food regulator.



As per the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, Sub-Regulation 2.3.14, which pertains to the restrictions relating to the conditions for sale, states that the powdered spices and condiments can only be sold in a packed condition, and prohibits the sale of powdered spices and condiments in the loose form, with provisions of penalties

for persons who manufacture for sale, store, sell or distribute adulterated spices.

As per FSSAI, the guidance note will increase consumers' awareness about safety of ground spices and will serve as a guide for them to ensure that purchased spices are not adulterated. Experts opined that it was a proactive move by the apex regulator, because spices were important commodities in every Indian kitchen, and owing to the unavailability of packaged spices, consumers often ended up buying loose ones.

Commenting on the guidance note, an official from LocalCircles, a social media platform connecting organisations and the community, informed, "It is important to control adulteration in spices, but the bulk of the spices is sold in the open as non-packaged products, and it is elitism to insist that all consumers should buy only packaged spices." "When the corporate sector makes a policy for regulators, such oversight is natural. That is why such policies will not help in removing adulteration. These rules are basically built to push consumers towards the expensive option, i.e. packaged products," he added.

"This does not only have an adverse effect on prices, but also on trade and jobs, especially small and medium enterprises that dominate spice trade," the official said. "It is important that policies are made taking into account how the Indian market functions and how the spice trade is conducted, instead of letting it be dictated by a lobby," he added. "Consultation with public and citizens would have helped the regulator evolve a more holistic policy," the official stated. Usha Sisodia, dietitian, Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital, Vile Parle, said, "This note is definitely going to help the consumer to get good-quality spices without any adulteration."

"The only worries will be for those who are not literate. So in my opinion, it should be prepared using colloquialisms in every language," she added. "The apex regulator should also consider preparing a brief advertising note for television, using social networking sites such as Facebook, and arranging common

education programmes at various public places,” Sisodia said. She added, “Adulteration of spices cannot be easily stopped. It can directly affect the business of many people. So the government should impose hefty fines on those who prove to be culprits.”