

FSSAI asks state authorities to up surveillance on use of stapled tea bags

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed the state food authorities to enhance surveillance on use of stapled tea bags.

FSSAI says that taking cognizance of risk to public safety in the wake of any loose staple pin being consumed inadvertently with tea causing serious health hazard, it had in July 2017 issued direction to discontinue manufacturing, storage, distribution, sale and import of stapled tea bags which came into force on January 2018.

However, based on representation received from industries and food business operators, seeking extension for compliance with the direction, implementation of the order was extended upto June 30, 2019.

Also in January 2019, FSSAI decided to look into the application for further extension of the order on case to case basis beyond June 30, 2019, and 16 manufacturers of tea bags were allowed to manufacture tea bags with staple pins up to December 31, 2021, while allowing sale of such stapled tea bags in the domestic market until December 31, 2023.

“The decision was taken based on the roadmap received from the manufacturers of stapled tea bags for complete switchover to stapleless tea bags,” says a senior official with the FSSAI.

However, FSSAI says that it was noticed that a number of FBOs manufacturing stapled tea bags have either not yet sought extension of time for compliance or not responded to the further queries raised by the FSSAI with regards to their proposal for migration from stapled teabags to stapleless tea bags.

Hence, “The commissioner of food safety of states and UTs and Central licensing authorities are requested to carry out surveillance on manufacture and import of stapled tea bags in their respective area of jurisdiction. And communicate the action taken report to FSSAI,” says the order.