

FSSAI may replace traffic light system with keyhole type nutrition logo

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E-paper

FSSAI is considering replacing its proposed labelling norms which require the use of a traffic light system for representing salt, sugar and fat content on food packaging with a 'symbol' of nutrition on the lines of 'keyhole' logo.

The change is said to be due to the opposition from the industry to the traffic light system that advocated use of red colour for foods that were high in salt, sugar and fat content. According to sources, the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) is now considering to propose the use of a 'symbol' of nutrition that would help consumers identify the products with less salt, sugar and fat. And this 'symbol' would be different from the symbol of fortification.

In this regard, it is learnt that FSSAI is currently studying the 'keyhole' logo used in Nordic countries, which signifies healthy food with less of fat, salt and sugar content. First used in Sweden in 1989, the logo got a widespread appreciation from Nordic countries and now all the Nordic countries including Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland use this symbol for representation of healthy food.



The keyhole logo in Nordic countries helps consumers identify the products with less salt, sugar and fat content, of which the limit is set by the food safety agency of these countries, and lets them differentiate them from food products with more fibre and whole grain content. The keyhole logo is currently a trademark owned by the Swedish National Food Agency. Labelling with the symbol is voluntary.

One of the sources, a senior official privy to the development, said that this would be a way by which companies could be nudged to produce healthier food products. "It (the symbol) may be different for India but the aim is to make consumers aware about the content. Like the F+ logo for fortification, which now we were able to push in a major way, this symbol should be able to make consumers aware and satisfy about the nutritional content of the food product."

He added that a constructive dialogue with the industry would be required for this as well along with a programme to propagate this symbol amongst the masses. Currently in the above-mentioned four Nordic countries, around 1,500 such unique products are carrying keyhole logo. Meanwhile, it is learnt that FSSAI may consider lowering of the limit of GM declaration, which it earlier proposed at 5%. The lower limit is not yet agreed as it is a technical call, the FSSAI, however, felt that it may reduce the current threshold.

It is pertinent to mention here that in India, the apex food regulator earlier, proposed a traffic light symbol for representation of the values of salt, sugar and fat and it intended to direct that if the amount exceeded the desired limit, then companies had to show it with red colour.

The industry vociferously opposed the move which led the Health Ministry to intervene and now a committee is looking into the matter, which is expected to make its recommendations soon.