

## Will TN implement test on trans fat content?

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Chennai: While several civil society organisations have hailed the move of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI's) plan to bring down the trans fat content to zero per cent in a calculative manner, it is left with the thought of how the State government will be testing the food products.

It is expected to become a reality soon. If sources are to be believed, the Central government has chipped in to conduct tests in accredited private labs.

According to the official draft document released by FSSAI, dated 22 July, "The trans fat content in fats and oils has already been limited to five per cent and the notification to further reduce it to three per cent by 2021 and to two per cent by 2022 is under process. The regulation is also being extended to food products having fats/oils."

Speaking about the implementation, Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG) Consumer Protection Department director Saroja said, "The implementation of the rule in Tamilnadu is questionable as the government has not started looking for compliance. As of now, there is no data available to check if it is being regulated. However, awareness campaigns are happening and the department is active in that way and is looking for ways to begin testing."



To ensure that the law is being complied with, all stakeholders – manufacturers, food business operators and others – must be made a part of the conversation. It requires political will as it involves the health of people. If it is done, it will help manufacturers comply with the regulation, Saroja added.

Consumer Association of India liaison officer Somasundaram recorded similar thoughts. “The State agency is yet to issue order to the manufacturers with regard to usage of ‘trans fat free’ label and the implementation is yet to kickstart here in Tamilnadu.”

In a recent development, according to sources, it is learnt that FSSAI has taken up the responsibility to reimburse the costs of conducting the testing of samples in accredited private labs.

Reacting to it, Saroja said if it is implemented, the State agency need not any more wait for funding support or for enhancing the infrastructure of laboratories. “In many cases, the labs are not well-equipped to test trans fats.”

Further, CAG and other organisations have submitted an eight-point charter of demands to FSSAI in which the implementation of bringing down trans fat levels, effective monitoring and checking the infrastructure of the State labs if they are well-equipped to take up testing of samples are added.

A senior official from State Food Safety Department stated that they are waiting for approval from FSSAI. “We are looking for support from private labs to undertake tests. We are hoping to receive a response in another 10-15 days,” the official added.