

FSSAI sets norms limiting use of industrial trans-fats by 2022

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From January 1, 2022, food products will not contain industrial trans fatty acids more than 2%

With the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) setting January 1, 2022 as the deadline for limiting trans-fat levels in food products and edible oils and fats to 2 per cent, India will join a club of about 40 countries globally that are formulating policies for elimination of trans-fats from their food supply chains.

Industrially produced trans fatty acids (TFAs) are bad fats and associated with high cholesterol and heart diseases and elimination of trans-fats from diets is considered crucial for prevention of heart diseases according to health experts. For instance, trans-fats are majorly present in vanaspati which is used to prepare *mithai* and fried foods, margarine and bakery shortenings used to make cakes, pastries and puffs.

Oils & fats

As per its strategy charted out in 2018, FSSAI has set the limit for industrial TFAs in edible oils and fats to not more than 3 per cent effective January 1, 2021 and by January 1, 2022 the limit will be further reduced in all fats and oils to not more than 2 per cent.

Last week, the regulator in a separate notification said that all food products, in which edible oils and fats are used as ingredients, shall also not contain industrial trans-fatty acids

of more than 2 per cent (by mass) effective January 1, 2022. Dairy, meat and fish based products are excluded from these norms.

Sensitising the industry

In a bid to ensure the implementation of these norms across the food supply chain, the food safety authority has held a series of webinars on these issues for food companies. Nearly 3,700 participants from edible oil companies, food businesses, bakers, chefs, sweet and *namkeen* manufacturers and food analysts and other segments have attended these webinars. Each of these webinars was targeted at a specific industry and focus was on making the stakeholders aware about the technological solutions that can help them solve challenges faced in making a shift to trans fat free products, officials said.

Ashwin Bhadri, CEO of Equinox Labs, says, “With FSSAI regulating trans fats to 3 per cent now, India has achieved a new milestone. Trans-fats are largely present in partially hydrogenated vanaspati, vegetable fats/oils, margarine, and baked and fried foods, in order to increase stability and extend shelf-life. Research has shown that higher intakes of trans fatty acids are associated with high cholesterol and heart diseases. This becomes significant during the time of a pandemic as cardiovascular diseases are proving to be fatal for Covid patients.”

“It is important now that food businesses strictly comply with the policy in order to achieve the 2022 goal set by FSSAI,” Bhadri added.