

FSSAI notifies regulations to limit trans fat in food items

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Photo for representation.

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Food regulator FSSAI on Tuesday said regulations to limit the content of trans fat in all food items have been notified.

“With gazette of recent regulation to limit the content of trans fats in all food items, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) joins the league of several other nations globally having best practice policies for trans fat elimination,” the regulator said in a statement.

India joins the club of around 40 countries globally that have already enacted the best practice policies to eliminate trans fats and would be among the first countries in Asia after Thailand in achieving the best-practice policies in trans fat elimination, it said.

Under the regulation notified on December 29 last year, FSSAI said it has limited industrial TFA (trans fatty acids) to not more than 3 per cent in all fats and oils by January 2021 and not more than 2 per cent by January 2022.

The Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Second Amendment Regulations, 2021, has been notified earlier this month.

This regulation states that all food products in which edible oils and fats are used as an ingredient should not contain industrial trans fatty acids more than 2 per cent by mass of the total oils/fats present in the product, on and from January 1, 2022.

It also defines industrial trans fatty acids as: “All the geometrical isomers of mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids having non-conjugated, interrupted by at least one methylene group, carbon-carbon double bonds in the trans configuration. It excludes trans-fatty acids from dairy, meat, fish and their products.”

Industrial trans fats are produced by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them solid, which increases their stability at room temperature and extends shelf life. Trans fats are largely present in partially hydrogenated vegetable fats/oils, vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortenings. They are found in baked and fried foods.

“Research has shown that higher intakes of industrially produced trans fatty acids (more than 1 per cent of total energy intake) are associated with increased risk of high cholesterol and heart diseases,” FSSAI said.

According to 2017 estimates, every year more than 1.5 million deaths in India is attributed to coronary heart disease, of which nearly 5 per cent (71,000) are due to trans fats intake.

Elimination of industrial TFA has been recognized as one the modifiable risk factors to prevent heart diseaes.

“This is especially important in the present scenario, when COVID -19 is adding risk to people suffering from comorbidities like hypertension, heart diseases, diabetes etc,” it added.

In 2018, the WHO called for elimination of industrially-produced trans fat from the food supply by 2023 and released an action package ‘REPLACE’ for the same. — PTI