

## **US says FSSAI's non-GMO certification requirement has hit its apple exports**

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Amiti Sen New Delhi | Updated on July 27, 2021



In submission to WTO, India urged to withdraw measure, consider ‘non-discriminatory’ approaches

The US has said that its apple exports to India have been disrupted due to New Delhi’s decision to mandate ‘non-GM (genetically modified) origin’ and ‘GM-free’ certificates for certain agricultural imports and has proposed that the measure be withdrawn.

“The measure (GM-free certificate requirement) has disrupted US apple exports. Trade stoppages risk future product shortages and could lead to price increase for Indian consumers and further disruptions to Indian supply chain,” the US said in a recent representation to the Sanitary & Phytosanitary Committee of the WTO.

Last August, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) published an order specifying that every consignment of 24 identified food products need to be accompanied by a non-GM-origin-cum-GM-free certificate issued by Competent National Authority of the exporting country.

#### Food items

The order was to be effective from January 1, 2021, but was postponed to March 1. The food items requiring the certification include pineapples, apples, wheat, rice, tomato, potato, maize, melon, plum, papaya, potato, egg plant, bean, among others.

Following the imposition of the non-GMO certification requirement from March 1 2021, apple exporters from the US have reportedly complained that the Indian market is technically closed for them as at present, the US Department of Agriculture does not issue such certificates.

“Apple exports from the US to India had already taken a hit following imposition of additional import duties of 20 per cent in 2019, as retaliation for US action against Indian steel & aluminium. This increased total import duties on the fruit to 70 per cent. There has been a sharp drop in apple exports from the US to India over the last couple of years and shipments are expected to fall further this year because of the GM-free mandatory certification,” a person tracking the industry told *BusinessLine*.

#### Fall in imports

Import of fresh apples from the US to India dropped 32.91 per cent in 2020-21 to \$34.60 million from \$51.58 million in 2019-20.

The US, in its submission to the SPS Committee this month, reiterated that India must provide the scientific justification and the risk assessment for the measure, or otherwise indicate the relevant international standards or guidelines on which this measure is based. “In the absence of this information, the US again urges India to withdraw its measure,” it said.

The mandatory certificate requirement imposed by India follows a study carried out by research and advocacy body Centre for Science and Environment in 2018 which found that despite the FSSAI not allowing GM food in the country, several samples of edible oils, processed and

packaged food and infant food items, produced locally and imported, were found to contain GM ingredients. While 32 per cent samples tested GM-positive, the bulk of it was imported.

Washington suggested that India could consider alternative approaches that can be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner, and in a way that is not more trade-restrictive than necessary.

In January 2021, the US had proposed technical cooperation with India to develop alternatives to the non-GM origin and GM-free certificate. “We look forward to the FSSAI response to this proposed technical cooperation opportunity as a means by which we can develop a mutually agreeable approach to this issue,” it said in its latest submission.