The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is drawing up guidelines to regulate organic food.

The regulator will put up draft guidelines for organic packaged food and commodities in the public domain for suggestions next month.

The size of the organic food (grains and pulses) market in the country is around Rs 3,350 crore and industry estimates suggest the market is growing 30 per cent a year.

Organic food exporters are now required to obtain approval from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority. There are no guidelines for domestic players.

"The initial draft, prepared after consultations with stakeholders, is ready,” said Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI.

The draft will propose setting up of a committee to suggest changes in the certification method being followed now.

The FSSAI is also planning to ensure more disclosures about food. “Contents and calorie counts are now mentioned on packets. We are trying to figure out how more details can be incorporated in bar codes printed on packs,” Agarwal said.

“We are also consulting with the Indian Dietetics Association and the Nutrition Society of India,” he added.
The regulator is also trying to rope in restaurants to offer healthier food choices to patrons. Restaurants may be required to list ingredients used and calorie counts. “It is voluntary now, but is increasingly becoming a global practice,” said Agarwal. The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India is working with the FSSAI on this initiative.

The FSSAI is sending a team to train staff at 20 temples in Tamil Nadu that offer food and drinks to devotees. The regulator will pursue such training programmes across the country.