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FSSAI new list includes new additives and ingredients in line with Codex

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has issued a draft notification for amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, to permit more additives and prescribe their limits as per the international standard Codex.

According to experts, these regulations, called as Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Amendment Regulations, 2017, brings into picture detailed products and ingredients, as well as changes in several food categories and food items. This brings under scanner and compliance, various newly used additives and ingredients.

“For example, dairy and non-dairy based whiteners, or use of terminology 'Peeled or cut, minimally processed fruit' instead of 'Peeled or cut fresh fruit.' Such technical terminology gives a better idea to the food business operators about the kind of compliance that should be observed against certain products that are closely linked to each other,” states Ashwin Bhadri, CEO, Equinox Labs, an NABL-accredited lab.

He added, "It clears the confusion any food business operator might have regarding regulation that he/she has to follow. Also, this helps food safety officers and related stakeholders to clearly differentiate the complying businesses from non-complying ones. These changes might seem small, but overall, these changes can ensure a better, safer product and stronger business and Indian food market."

The draft describes dairy-based drinks, flavoured and/or fermented, imitation chocolate, chocolate substitute products. Hard candy, soft candy, nougats and marzipans. Dried whey and whey products, excluding whey cheeses along with limits of various additives.

Draft on Antibiotics

Meanwhile, FSSAI has notified the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2017,
specifying the tolerance limit of antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances. These regulations have clearly defined antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances that should not be added into food products from animal sources or fisheries.

Overall, there are 21 antibiotics which are and can be used in humans and animals, and 71 antibiotics which can be used exclusively in animals. A detailed information on their tolerance limits and the different food types with special tolerance levels - all are defined in this regulation.

According to Bhadri, this was a long-due regulation and this change will definitely have a positive impact on food industry depending on animal sources. A clear picture will help meat processors, handlers, traders and retailers to understand the health hazards an antibiotic or its excess quantity may have. This ensures that the food obtained from animal sources, is safe to consume, of good quality and hygienic.

He explained, "Any antibiotic in excess or its presence alone can be dangerous to the health of a human. Such antibiotics can lead to the development of its resistance to the human pathogen. This means, that if that particular drug is used to treat a human being against that particular pathogen, the microorganism, now immune to that drug, will be untreatable.

He added, “This can result into - Development of Drug-resistant strain; Using higher dose/different drug which can be dangerous to other human organs with effective side-effects. Thus, these regulations will prevent the development of drug resistance in human pathogens as well as health hazards.”

In a statement, FSSAI said that use of antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances is required for disease control, the residue of such antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances could appear in the food from such animal, in the absence of requisite measure to control antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances’ residue in food.

As per FSSAI, “Further, internationally use of antibiotic and pharmacologically active substances are prohibited in food stuff of animal origin including fish and fisheries products. And there is ample evidence of development of antibiotic resistance in human pathogen, if these substances continue to come through food.”

The food regulator informed, “In order to ensure that the residue of antibiotic in food from animal does not pose a threat to human health, it is necessary to specify the tolerance limit of antibiotic and pharmacologically
active substances in food stuff of animal origin. The FSSAI has notified this draft regulation for inviting comments from stakeholder within 30 days from the date of availability to public.”