FSSAI directs FBOs to revalidate products in proprietary food category

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Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has asked the food business operators (FBOs) to revalidate their products, which fall under the definition of proprietary food, supplements, nutraceuticals, special dietary uses, for medical purposes, functional food and novel food. The FBOs were given time till January 31, 2018 to comply with the order, failing which the product approval/no-objection certificate (NOC) shall stand withdrawn.

The country’s apex food regulator has issued the order asking the FBOs that till August 2015, the apex food regulator issued product approval/NOCs for the manufacture, storage, distribution, import and sale of such products for which standards did not exist. Subsequently, FSSAI, in recent times, had amended regulations with respect to proprietary food enlarging Regulations 2.12 regarding food products and additives. “In addition several of the new product standards and regulations were developed,” said the order, adding that FSSAI had also notified the food safety and standards regulations for supplements, nutraceuticals, special dietary uses, for medical purposes, functional food and novel food.

The order said, “It is expected that most of the products for which the NOC or product approval was given would be covered under one of the product category (of proprietary foods, supplements, nutraceuticals, special dietary uses, for medical purposes, functional food, novel foods, etc.) Such FBOs are advised to confirm to this office that their products are in complete compliance with the requirement of the regulations.
under which they are now stand covered.”

It added that FBOs whose products were still not covered under any of these regulations are advised to revalidate the product approval/NOC granted to them by submitting the necessary documents to the apex regulator as per the Food Safety and Standards (Approval for Non-Specified Food and Food Ingredients) Regulations, 2017. Such FBOs also need not submit any additional fee.

Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs, said, “This is the best time for the food processing industry. There are decent options to include in the product, and if the product is new, there is a method to standardise the same. There is a vast array of process aids and additives that can be used. All in all, this leaves minimal chances of non-compliance and increased transparency amongst FBOs.”

He explained that the number of permitted additives that could be used by FBOs was issued. Also, a special mention of categories of food like health supplements, probiotics, etc., was made to segregate food products and avoid confusion.

The revalidation process and the time frame for the same has also made their entry. With this, FSSAI has benefited the FBOs by avoiding confusion as to the source used to create an ingredient, the multiple options that can be used in place of non-standardised foods and a product approval process which helps FBOs by analysing the new product and its clearance.

It is pertinent to mention here that, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, recently in FSSAI’s work audit report, had recommended to ensure that all licences issued to food companies under the erstwhile system of product approvals be reviewed and licences be revoked and reissued as per the requirements of the present regulations.