New rules for beef, mutton trade on anvil

Bengaluru: While the Centre has imposed stringent curbs on beef trade with a law that limits sale of bovine animals to farmers, India’s top food standards agency has now come up with updated quality standards in mutton related products, including beef, defining it as edible portion of bovine animals including buffaloes.

Even as the beef ban controversy simmers, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has published a draft set of standards for beef, pork, mutton, fish, eggs etc., and called for suggestions, views and comments, before they are turned into law.

The implication is that, the FSSAI’s Scientific Committee, which lays down mandatory standards that govern food in the country, recognises beef, from all bovine animals, as food. But in one of the sub clauses it prohibits use of meat and/or bone meal, internal organs, blood meal and tissues of animals, in particular, cow or its progeny.

The set of standards lay down the definition for beef, fresh beef, chilled beef, frozen beef and beef edible offal. It defines the moisture, protein and fat content in beef ranging from 68 to 77%, 17.5 to 23.5% and 8 to 12%, respectively. For buffalo meat, the suggested fat content ranges from 1 to 3%. Beef is categorized as three types: (i) Fresh/Chilled/Frozen carcasses; (ii) Fresh/Chilled/Frozen cuts and (iii) Fresh/Chilled/Frozen Edible offals. Fresh/Chilled/Frozen cuts are further defined to include: Round, Top Side, Silver Side, Knuckle, Rump, Sirloin, Short Loin, Tender Loin, Flank, Rib, Short Plate, Square-cut, Chuck, Chuck Tender, Brisket, Blade, and Shin and Shank.
Standards for pork lays down that it is the ‘edible portion of domestic pig’. Fresh pork should not be treated in any way to ensure preservation. Chilled pork should be chilled at 0-7 degrees Celsius, and frozen pork should be chilled at minus-18 degrees Celsius.

As for shelf life, the FSSAI has mandated that pork must be stored in refrigeration (4±1º C) for short time storage and deep freezer (-18±1º C) for long term storage or by any other suitable method to maintain quality. The chilled material should be consumed within 2 to 4 days under normal refrigeration conditions. Frozen meat shall be consumed within 10 months.

Standards have been drafted for chevon (goat meat), mutton (meat of sheep or lambs), poultry, fishery and eggs. Poultry meat means the edible portion of poultry birds such as chicken, duck, Turkey, geese, guinea fowl, Japanese quail.