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**FSSAI in high gear to make food safer**

NEW DELHI: The central food regulator has been very proactive with regard to issues like safety and standards, including labelling of packaged products and nutrient content, which has led to a sharp rise in the number of notices, orders and guidelines issued by it since 2015.

A series of notifications and guidelines have been issued by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to safeguard consumer interest as part of the health ministry's plan to strengthen the regulatory regime (see graphic).

Food regulation in India has mostly been a conflicting turf between the industry, the regulator and the consumer.

However, the packaged food industry is rapidly growing, making it all the more important for the government and regulator to set the ground rules in the interest of the industry as well as consumers.

"Packaged food is the reality of the day but so is the growing burden of disorders like obesity, diabetes and heart ailments. We are trying to ensure food safety by bringing changes in regulations and undertaking other initiatives," an official said.

He added that the FSSAI and the ministry was trying to work with food companies to bring in provisions like nutrient profiling not just for packaged food but also in restaurants. "This will allow consumers to make an informed choice," he said.
India's diabetes burden and the obesity problem have assumed serious levels. Experts blame these on the consumption of sugary beverages and junk food. The disease burden is also fast increasing among children.

All package products should mention quantity of MAIDA/White Flour which are harmful for health.

The FSSAI plans to control sourcing of raw materials by restaurants and food manufacturers. So far, vendors of vegetables, spices and other raw materials are not required to have licences from the FSSAI.

Another major area of focus is curbing availability of junk food and those high on sugar, salt and trans-fat in and around schools. The idea is to control incidence of non-communicable diseases among the youth.