FSSAI amends rule to make testing methods uniform and avoid variations

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), in a bid to ensure uniformity in the method of testing food samples in laboratories and avoid variations in results, has issued a notice stating that it has amended Clause 7 of Rule 2.4.2 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2005, which pertains to the method of analysis for the purpose of conducting tests in laboratories.

According to the notice, it had been observed that laboratories had been following any method of analysis prescribed by national or international agencies, as per their choice. So, the amendment was proposed in order to have a uniform method of analysis, which would be adopted by all.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI said, “There can be cases where we may not have a manual for testing a particular food product or a standard which does not have a reference in our manual.”

“Therefore, it was done to permit the labs to use the international standards for analysis, duly validated by the accreditation bodies.” He added that this would also lead to uniform results post-analysis.
The notice said, “The manuals specifying the methods of analysis, as amended or adopted by the authority from time to time, shall be used to analyse the samples of food articles.”

“How ever, in case the method for analysing any parameter is not available in these manuals, a validated method of analysis prescribed by an internationally-recognised analytical, regulatory agency, shall be adopted by the authority,” it added.

The country’s apex food regulator, meanwhile, has released a set of renewed list of 129 National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories-(NABL) accredited labs and published an official gazette and the scope of testing and analysis of food samples taken under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The northern region of the country has 44 labs, the southern region has 43, the western region has 36 and the eastern region has six.