FSSAI licenses must for food product sales to ensure customers’ health

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Licenses from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are mandatory for the sales of food product to ensure the health and safety of the consumers. This was stated by Pawan Kumar Agarwal, the country’s apex food regulator’s chief executive officer, while inaugurating Foodzania 2017, the food service retail conclave organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in New Delhi.

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 regulates the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import of food to promote health and safety of consumers. “It governs people involved in any food business, whether manufacturing or selling, and food business operators (FBOs). These include shops, stalls, hotels, restaurants, airline services and food canteens, places or vehicles where any article of food is sold or manufactured or stored for sale,” he added.

In his inaugural address, the FSSAI chief said that the regulator was keen to further simplify the compliance processes with active industry support and consultation. However, he added that it was mandatory for all food businesses – caterers, manufacturers, companies transporting food items and retail outlets with 25 or more people handling food to have at least one trained food safety supervisor.

The supervisor should be trained under the Food Safety Training and Certification Programme (FoSTaC), designed by FSSAI. The supervisors would be responsible for ensuring that food quality is maintained.

Agarwal also highlighted the need for the intended engagements from the industry side to protect and ensure the trust of consumers in the food that they intake, adding that the display of the food licenses in the
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hotel/restaurant premises was an ideal way to go forward.

FSSAI is keen to rate the FBO through hygiene variety factors and will allocate star ratings to the restaurants and eating places out of six on the basis of such factors as hygiene awareness, safety processes, etc.

Unnat Varma, managing director, Indian sub-continent, Pizza Hut, and chairperson, FICCI Food Service Retail Taskforce, said, “In the progressive Indian society, food expenditure holds a lot of prominence, constituting the largest retail consumption category.”

“In fact, the Indian food retail industry is positioned globally as the sixth-largest and has been increasing at a steady pace of over 20 per cent annually. Owing to this reason, the food services industry in the country has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past few years, contributing a significant proportion to India’s economic performance,” he added.

Saurabh Kochhar, chief executive officer, Foodpanda, and Chairperson, FICCI Food Service Retail Taskforce, said, “Foodzania is the initiative by FICCI Food Service Retail Task Force which was formed to address the issues faced by the stakeholders in the sector.”

“The Indian F&B sector is poised to witness a sea change. The recent times have seen significant discussions in this sector, which has led to a major reform of allowing foreign direct investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail in India. This is anticipated to have a game-changing impact on the modern retail sector in India and the nation at large,” he added.

However, Kochhar added that it was not a one-stop solution to address the challenges of this huge industry.

“Various issues like infrastructure bottlenecks, multiple laws and regulations, skill gap, etc. still remain key concerns, and we aim to deliberate on these ground realities,” he said.

“We all know that the food and beverage (F&B) sector is one of the more matured industry in India. The huge consumer base in India provides numerous opportunities for every player to exist and operate successfully in this sector,” Kochhar added.

“The industry, being deeply connected with our day-to-day lives, holds the responsibility of serving their consumers most effectively with best
quality and prices,” he said.

“FSSAI, has always been at forefront in facilitating the investments in the F&B sector, and I trust the industry will provide full support to the government in achieving this task together,” Kochhar added.

“Further, the government has allowed 100 per cent FDI for trading including through e-commerce, in respect of food products manufactured or produced in India,” he said.

“One hundred per cent FDI is already permitted in manufacturing of food products through automatic route. This will provide impetus to the foreign investment in food processing sector, benefit farmers immensely and will create vast employment opportunities,” Kochhar added.

“This has enhanced investment opportunities in India globally, and have generated interest among the leading world food retailers for making investment in India,” he said.

“I am confident that this conference will come forward with new ideas that will boost the growth of the F&B sector, and at the same time, enhance consumers’ welfare,” added Kochhar.

On the occasion, Agarwal with other dignitaries launched the FICCI-Technopak report, titled Indian Food Services Industry: Engine for Economic Growth and Employment- A Roadmap for Unlocking Growth, which highlighted the overall potential of the food service in India and captures the emerging trends in the industry.

The report also threw light upon the ease of doing business scenario in the industry and recommended key alterations required to stimulate the growth in the food service industry, helping the industry realise its true potential. A concerted and collaborative effort was made to suggest the next steps to address the various issues faced by the industry.