FSSAI establishes Smart Consumer app integration to redress complaints

In an attempt to provide better consumer access, particularly towards quick and satisfactory resolution of grievances, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has established a network integration with the Smart Consumer app for a robust, effective and efficient system of redressing consumer complaints relating to food, apart from providing information about smart buying tips and claim busters.

With the said objective, the country’s apex food regulator, the ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution and GS1 India (a standard body set up by the ministry of commerce and industry, along with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the Federation of Indian Exporters’ Organisations (FIEO), the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), the Indian Merchants’ Chamber (IMC) and Spices Board), jointly organised a national conference, whose theme was Enabling Regulatory Compliance and Connecting with Consumers.

The Smart Consumer app was developed in 2016 by the ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution in association with GS1 India.

During his keynote session, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, addressed the need of enhancing the usability of channels as to provide an effective mechanism for grievance redress.

“We want to make sure that no complaint goes unresolved, and hence, integration with appropriate channels is relevant,” he added.
“The integration will enable consumers to get more visibility to FSSAI license numbers/certificates, product recall alerts and customer complaint modules for reporting food quality- and safety-related issues directly to FSSAI through the scanning of barcodes [which use the global trade item number (GTIN)] on consumer products through the Smart Consumer mobile app,” Agarwal said.

These new features, through integration with the Smart Consumer app, would greatly benefit consumers in confirming that food products being purchased by them are from FSSAI-registered/licensed manufacturing units.

During the conference, the regulator also sensitised food manufacturing units, retailers and e-commerce platforms/food portals on product recalls and the e-commerce guidelines which need to be complied with from a food safety perspective.

The mobile app connects consumers digitally with manufacturers/suppliers using their customer care contact details for speeding redressal of complaints. It also enables consumers to access all marking/labelling information of products effortlessly. In several instances, it is difficult to read the information printed on the product label.

When a product’s barcode is scanned or its barcode number (GTIN) is entered, it displays all product-related information on the Smart Consumer app, which is powered by DataKart, the national product repository used by a number of food business operators (FBOs).