FSSAI issues alert on chocolates with plastic fragments from Denmark
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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has sent out an alert notification, reacting to the notice received from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) issued by the European Commission (EC) after plastic fragments were found in chocolates exported from Denmark to various countries.

According to the notification, the warning read, “There is a risk that the product in question contains small pieces of plastics, which may cause choking in children. Thus, it is imperative to start follow-up action, including recall.”

According to notification, these chocolates are being imported to countries like India, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Qatar, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom. All these countries have been informed about the implicated product, and the associated follow-up has been already commenced.

Analysing the scenario, Arpita Mukherjee, professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), said, “The kinds of chocolates which have been detected with small pieces of plastic are not usually what small children consume. However, irrespective of age, this is a health and food safety issue. The European Commission has done the right thing by alerting the importing countries.”

She added, “In fact, the European Union (EU) has more stringent standards for food than India and they are the same for the domestic market, export and import.”

“If a product imported into EU member states do not meet the EU food safety standards, an alert is raised on the RASFF portal. This portal also gives the risk level. India does not have a similar system of reporting imported products,” Mukherjee said.

Further, the Indian food safety standards for milk and some milk products are below the Codex standards, and hence, there is a likely chance of importing sub-standard products which can cause health hazards.

Mukherjee said, “The EC has done the right job by raising the alert. It also shows their strong focus on food safety and health.”

“To avoid the import of sub-standard products into the country, FSSAI should bring the
milk and milk product standards to internationally approved standards,” she added.

“In India too, there have been several incidents related to the quality of milk and milk products, and there is no traceability to go to the source of the problem,” Mukherjee said.

“Such incidence can be avoided by upgrading the Indian domestic standards and closely monitoring imports at the ports of entry. It can also be avoided by implementing clear product traceability,” she added.

An official from FSSAI Authorised Officers (AOS) from the Kolkata region informed, “As of now, no sample or consignment has been found in the region. But following the instruction from FSSAI, continuous watch on the same is being carried out.”

The product category under which the chocolates are sold is cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea.

The following four product descriptions have been identified which are imported:

- Anthon Berg Marcipanbrod Whiskey 40g (marzipan bread with whiskey)
- Anthon Berg Marcipanbrod Cognac 40g (marzipan bread with cognac)
- Anthon Berg Sweet Moments Marzipan Bar Mini 165g
- Anthon Berg Sweet Moments Marzipan Collection 400g

The apex regulator has also made the information available to the notice of the public and stakeholders. This will help in any inadvertent consumption of the implicated product. With this, the consumer can avoid the consumption, as there might be a possibility of the product reaching the consumers through online sales or by other means.