FSSAI to curb misleading ads claiming food items as ‘fresh’, ‘natural’

According to a draft, use of the word ‘natural’ will be permitted only for food derived from a plant, animal, micro-organism or mineral and to which nothing has been added.

Advertisements that falsely label food items as ‘fresh’, ‘natural’, ‘traditional’, etc. have come under the scanner with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) formulating a draft notification to curb them.

According to the draft Food Safety and Standards (Advertisement and Claims) Regulation, the term ‘fresh’ can only be applied to products that have not been processed in any manner except washed, peeled, chilled, trimmed and put through other processing necessary for making it safe for consumption, without altering its basic characteristics.
“We are coming out with this draft notification to stop misleading ads and claims. It had been in the pipeline for some time to ensure people are not fooled in the name of natural and fresh food,” said Pawan Agarwal, CEO-FSSAI.

Food containing additives and/or subjected to packaging, storing or any other supply chain processes that control freshness shall not be termed as ‘freshly stored’ or ‘freshly packed’, according to the draft.

Use of the word ‘natural’ will be permitted only for food derived from a plant, animal, micro-organism or mineral and to which nothing has been added.

The products should only be subjected to processing that would make it suitable for human consumption like smoking without chemicals, cooking processes such as roasting, blanching and dehydration, freezing, concentration, pasteurisation, and sterilisation. The packaging should be done without chemicals and preservatives.

In June this year, the top food regulator also came up with regulations to ensure what is being sold as organic food is actually organic in nature.

“Our aim is to benefit consumers and promote food that is safe for consumption. There should not be any misleading promotion...” said Agarwal.