Hotels may have to give details of oil, fat used in cooking food items

Proposal part of FSSAI's efforts to ensure food safety across the country by bringing changes in regulations and undertaking other initiatives

Hotels, restaurants and other food outlets may soon have to declare what kind of oil or fat is being used in cooking each of the food items on their menus, according to a proposal by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

"Hotel, restaurant and other food stall shall mark or indicate exclusive desi ghee items to customer and whenever vanaspati or oil or fat is used, shall also be mark (marked) or indicate (indicated) to customer," the food regulator said in a proposal to change licensing conditions for entities selling prepared food items.

Riyaaz Amlani, president of lobby group National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI), termed the proposed demand as “a fair ask”.

FSSAI has been trying to ensure food safety across the country by bringing changes in regulations and undertaking other initiatives on its own and jointly with private companies in the food space. It earlier said that restaurants should declare calorific and nutritive values of the food they serve on their menus because consumers should know what they may be eating, Mint reported on 10 February.

That’s not all. As part of its agenda to ensure safe food across India, FSSAI also wants to control sourcing of raw materials by restaurants. “The restaurants shall buy food raw materials only from licensed or registered vendors and maintain record thereof,” FSSAI said in its proposal.
So far, vendors of vegetable, spices and other raw materials are not required to have licences from FSSAI.

FSSAI also proposes that restaurants should “employ at least one technical person or Food Safety Supervisor” trained by FSSAI. This may increase operations’ cost for restaurants, especially smaller ones. “It will increase cost. But it is a small price to pay for the health and well-being of our customers,” said Amlani, who owns Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt. Ltd that runs popular restaurant and bar and café chains such as Smoke House Deli and Social.

“FSSAI has been doing a commendable job in ensuring food safety, there might be some issues, but FSSAI is always open to dialogue with the industry. The NRAI is working closely to ensure training of the supervisors,” said Amlani.

FSSAI has also proposed that food business operators such as hotels, restaurants and others should have a Food Safety Display Board, prominently visible to consumers, that talks about food safety and hygiene practices followed by them at their premises.

India’s food services market is projected to grow to Rs4.98 trillion by 2021, expanding at an annual average rate of 10%, from Rs3.09 trillion in 2016, according to a joint study by NRAI and consulting firm Technopak published last year.