FSSAI to mandate certification for organic food

According to a Financial Chronicle report, Food safety regulator FSSAI may make its certification mandatory for organic food. The move is aimed at keeping an eye on the quality of organic food with too many products. The certification will be compulsory from July 1, 2018, sources said. Last month, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had released a unified regulation on ‘Organic Foods’ during the Organic World Congress in India.

India’s total area under organic certification has reached 5.71 million hectares and the country tops globally in terms of number of organic producers. Exports from India are pegged around 1.35 million tonnes of certified organic food per year. There are several brands such as Organic Tattva, Devbhumi, Navdanya, Organic India, Sattvic and Nature N Me selling their products in India. The Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations 2017 covers under its ambit two existing systems of organic certification - National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) and Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India). The regulation also provides for recognition of other certification systems in the future.

But with the focus of the government shifting to organic cultivation in a big way, there is deliberation as how best to unify these two systems. Sources said the FSSAI certification might be enough to brand a product as organic while the food safety standards regulator may internally make arrangements with NPOP and PGS-India, sources said. FSSAI is mandated to regulate organic food in the country under provisions of Section 22 of the Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006. The current regulation was notified after extensive consultations with various stakeholders including related ministries, agencies, NGOs and farmer organisations. Under the regulations, any food offered or promoted for sale, as ‘RS organic food’ is required to comply with all the requirements of NPOP or PGS-India or any other certification system that may be approved by FSSAI in the future.

However, direct sale of organic food by small farmers, producer or a producer organisation to the end consumer are exempt from this requirement. From July 1, 2018, a single unified logo for organic food will have to be used by all companies selling these products, sources said. Currently both systems in operation have separate logos.