FSSAI IN NEWS
A Glimpse
2016-17

There is huge amount of work that is being done by FSSAI, really, truly transformed the food safety and nutrition landscape of India.

- Sh. Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Ayog

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2016-17
There is huge amount of work that is being done by FSSAI, really, truly transformed the food safety and nutrition landscape of India. I am particularly delighted because when I first came to Delhi, I came to Ministry of Commerce & Udyog Bhawan & Mr. Bahuguna was the leader of our lunch club then & used to being the most fortified food even them. We used to get the best, fresh and the finest lunch in the room. And I am glad that Government selected him to be the Chairman of FSSAI and I am really glad that they selected Pawan as CEO, a very dynamic CEO. He is one of the finest officers of Government of India and they selected him as the CEO to bring great amount of positivity and a great amount of energy and dynamism in this organization and I am really delighted that he has done such a unique work in the world of food standards, in terms of simplification of standards, in terms harmonization of global standards, in terms of 11,000 new provisions of standards and that long awaited standards, that are released.

When I was secretary in DIPP, I used to say that FSSAI is the most bureaucratic organization, nothing moves here. But I have seen a change so radically, I have seen a change so positively and I have seen a great amount of energy brought here. It shows that a positive mindset can change an organization culture, the leadership is very very positive and therefore is has done some great work in food practices, in terms of safety compliances, in terms of food testing, and I am really glad that it has doubled the FSSAI notified labs in the last 3 years and today there are over 219 food labs, that it has launched mobile food labs, it has good capacity building methods, surveillance that is focused on food safety framing and it has focused on social and behavioral change, its focus is now on consumers, there is now too much stress on nutrition and this really shows that good governance in terms of being open, transparent, in terms of being proactive and innovative and in terms of good team work can radically change and organization but what has really impressed me is that fact that FSSAI has used a lot of technology. It is using technology to leapfroc and it’s important that it is now doing away the paper work because getting licenses and registration in FSSAI was used to be a nightmare. I am really glad that it strengthened its IT infrastructure & everything has been put online and online import clearances and all licensing and registration on, product approval, labs management system is online and over a period of time, there should be no physical paper and there should be no personal interaction with the staff of FSSAI. Everything is online, it should use big data analytics to push for things and there should be work on mobile apps because that’s the way India is growing. We are
the only country in the world with billion biometrics, we are the only country in the world with a billion mobile, we are the only country in the world which is using technology to leap fore in a very very big way. So we should really use technology in FSSAI to be the biggest driver of change. I am really delighted that so much of radical changes have been brought in this organization, so much of energy, freshness, vibrancy which is driving things forward.

FSSAI to my mind is very very critical and very very important organization of the government of India. Till just few years back we were net importer of food grain, we were not able to produce the quantity required to feed the huge population. We have been through the process of green revolution, we are now in the position to provide enough food to each household in India and we really demonstrated our ability to make a quantum jump in terms of production and productivity. But to my mind all this is not enough, large segment of our population is very very deficient in micronutrients and there is requirement that the food available in the market which is being served today should be absolutely safe, hygienic and wholesome and I am delighted that FSSAI is playing a very critical and important role.

The Act also envisages the regulation of manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import of food, to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. But in the presentation which Pawan made, or I think it was introduction written by Mr. Bahuguna in the book was released just now, I was glancing through it, I was very delighted with the words that FSSAI looks itself as facilitators and as a development agency which believes in the soft touch regulation. This is very different philosophy as some regulations believed to use hard regulations and some believe that they should do soft touch regulations. I am glad that Pawan and Mr. Bahuguna think themselves as facilitators, as soft touch regulations because we are in the process of evolution. And it is very important that we allow the industry to do a lot of self certification. We allow Industry to do a lot of risk assessment tests 7%, 8% but whenever someone is found as violating the norms after that then we should lay down the strengthen and toughest actions against them.

I believe that when once we take the toughest and strongest actions, the industry will ensure that there is not violation of norms. That is the way I see this system growing. And today there is the requirement to develop standards which are sought to be science based and base on local requirements and considering the free flow of food nowadays, WTO regime, the setting of standards cannot be in isolation and there is the requirement of aligning and harmonizing the standards, both International and Codex standards. And I am particularly delighted that FSSAI is the robust system, scientific panels and scientific committees for the purpose of formulation of standards and there are lot of large number of standards that are notified by FSSAI.
FSSAI is actually a very young agency we must recognize the fact that this is the agency that started only towards the end of 2011. I would also say that in India there are huge substances of food adulteration, so there is need of buildup of a system of regulatory compliance and surveillance to ensure that such incidences do not happen. We need to be extremely tough on that. I have said that we should allow self-certification but where deviations are found, we should go to other extreme and this would require food testing facilities across the country to enable the enforcement agencies to get the samples tested in the shortest possible time.

So I am delighted that FSSAI has pushed this, it has a scheme, adequate amount of resources for strengthening the laboratories in the country and that it includes the mobile testing labs beside the capacity building of the lab personnel and lab personnels are critical, that we train them, we do the capacity to global standards.

I have been interacting with a lot of users as I was in DIP, where I used to meet a lot of Industry, a lot of importer, investors etc. and I am told by many of them that they find a lot of positive feedback about FSSAI, that it had taken a range of initiatives to connect with citizens in multiple ways for creating food safety culture in this country. It has taken effort to ensure food safety in every, even in colony, I find FSSAI posters all over, so it believes now there is the need of branding, the positioning, the marketing for itself, and I think these are very good measures to ensure that we are able to provide safe food to the citizens, prevent food born infections and diseases.

I am very delighted to see the initiatives of FSSAI, to notify standards of some fortified foods. This is a very unique measure to meet the nutritional requirement of very very large segment of society which is deficient in micronutrients and this is very very big concern in India.

Almost 33% children are stunted in India and you cannot have demographic advantage of a very young population, if we are not able to provide micro nutrients to them. So this is a very very progressive move by FSSAI and I have all appreciations for this move.
So I would like to say that I have full faith and confidence that FSSAI would continue to take up more and more unique new initiatives from unsafe and adulterated food and assure an era of healthy living for all.

I would like to compliment, more than anything else, the staff of FSSAI where I suddenly find lot of positively, creativity and all this new initiatives in terms of publications, in terms of mascots, in terms of doing skits in schools, it shows that it has a very progressive mindset of taking its several new initiatives and its ability to promote food safety across India.

Congratulations and good wishes!
On the Occasion of Decade Celebration

22.10.2016

Sh. J.P. Nadda, Hon’ble Minister of H&FW

It’s a matter of great happiness for me on this occasion of commemoration of food law. We heard the views of Sh. Ashish Bahuguna ji, elaborately narrated the matter of FSSAI and how do we move forward in that direction. We have seen the views and initiatives the FSSAI has taken up in the past 10 years and our secretary has talked about the bottlenecks and how to realize the aims and objectives of FSSAI. I really feel that it is a very rightful occasion when a decade has passed and we stated our journey from PFA to FSSAI and integrated law from the rules & regulations, & regulatory authority to self regulation and to adopt a role of facilitation.

It’s a time now when we should think and take stalk of situation of from where we started, where we reached and where we have to go. It’s a time when we should rethink, look the backward journey and also see to it that how forward we have to go. And 2 feel that the past 2 discussions which have taken place and tomorrow the ... session that are going to take place where the stakeholders are going to speak and also the state authorities are going to speak who are the real implementors of FSSAI, when their views are going to come, I think we will be in the position to decide how to go forward. But certainly I would say that in this 10 years journey we have put a house into order.

It was idea, a mandate given where how to have safe standards and food safety issues, so now we have to keep house in orders, for that many deliberations have taken place by increasing scientific panels, by increasing the infrastructure and capacity building. Lot of exercise has been done in that connection.

We have been also to set up the authority, we have come out with rules and regulations and we are trying to make it more meaningful and with the support of the stakeholders, we have made a very transparent system where we have come out with the rules & regulations, not in isolation, not in silence but taking the stakeholders on board. So I feel that, there are many things to be done in coming times for five tuning and that five tuning is not a static process, it’s a continuous process. Some additions are done every time, so that’s a continuous process.

We have been now in the role of facilitators and when we talk about facilitator, the churning process is long. These was a time, last year ever last to last year, lot of antagonism has been developed. It was like there was some communication gap but by having interactions, by have discussions, we have been able to streamline those issue and lot of churning has taken place, which is very important and I feel that it’s a success.
story. If I talk about the future aspects, the safety and a standard of food is not only a health issue, it’s an economic issue.

We have got good safety standards, we have got a transparent system and if it’s a nationally and internationally recognized system, certainly the economic activities are going to go. And if the economic activities go, the export is going to increase; the demand is going to increase, so we should think in those terms also. And I feel that the leaders of the industry are very much increased in that; it has got a huge employment potential also, so we should think in those directions also. It boosts exports, agro products can be exported and what we need actually is to adopt the culture of safety and standards of food. And culture cannot be done by a regulatory mechanism. It has to be done by taking everybody on board right from the big industry to the smallest vendor on road. We all have to come on board and we have to see to it. It needs huge awareness programmes and I feel that we will all be working in that direction and that will be very meaningful and will be very useful also so we can see to it, that we are all there for issue related to food safety and we are being aware about it and work accordingly.

I would also like to congratulate FSSAI for establishing the standards of food, for bringing transparency in regulations and for creating awareness among the stakeholders. We are also trying to see that we digitalize the process and the process is transparent. These are the issue which we have taken care and we have tried to work and go forward in that direction.

One thing I would like to assume is that we believe in communication and we believe in 2 way communication. We are working together and with harmony and we have to work together with harmony and for that communication is a regular process, it’s a continuous process.

Many new initiatives are being taken and as I said that initiative is the continuous process and new initiative will keep on coming, so we will have to establish a system where 2 way communication goes on and if that goes on we will be able to go forward in that direction.

I congratulate the FSSAI, I thank the stakeholders, the; leads of the Industry. With your support, we will go forward another thing that I would like to assure is we are ‘on’ for capacity building. Capacity building not only at the national level, we are working to have very high quality laboratories. We are also working to support the states for high quality laboratories and for other capacity building also. I feel with your support, we will be able to do it. This is the time when you can think how to go forward. We have all gone a very long way and we have done a lot. But need not to get satisfies, much we will be able to do it.

Once again, it’s a very different task be the last speaker and that to before dinner. I tried to do justice and be precise.
On the Occasion of Decade Celebration

22.10.2016

Sh. C. K Mishra, Health Secretary, Minister of H&FW

First and foremost let me congratulate all those who have involved in this long journey of FSS Act implementation. Its great job done and each one of you, those who have involved, need to be congratulated, because this is a unique effort and as we go along we will need many more hands its join us if we want to make it successfully.

Speakers before me particularly, when Mr. Agarwal was making presentation and the chairperson on who was also talking about it and in the sessions that are proceeded, the act, the controversy, the difficulties, the pathway has all been discuss. So I am not going to get into the act per say but permit me just to share a few thoughts which I thought we can together think and perhaps contemplate in what we had to do in future and how we need to take this forward.

It's in many ways a unique opportunity when we are celebrating in same sense regulations. When you look at the national scenario regulations are rarely celebrated. This is a 10 years of celebrations of a regulation, so it’s different and largely because this one aims at better health, better food products and a better system. It also provides, if nothing else, a collaborative platform where we earn together workout system which will ensure safety and quality of food.

This Act has come a long way in its implementations and has seen many ups and downs, made remarkable strikes and helped both industries as well as the consumers. If you look at the road ahead, it’s a difficult on the road behind was not without the lamps either. But I would again say that it’s a great jobs done till here. But the journey travelled so far has been fruitful and in many sense and given many of us, if nothing some fruitful thought. So this is the journey that we really need to celebrate.

But what has emerged out of this entire exercise in this last 10 years a Mr. Agarwal explained is clarity of thought. And that clearly of thought is how do we harmonize, how do we collaborate and how do we create an environment where less questions are asked and more could be answered. It's an environment of harmonization and it’s a thought, a unifying thought, how do we implement this kind of regulation in the Act across the country uniformly so that nobody suffers.

I was testing to the panel before this and there were certain issues that were brought up. Any implementations will have to make things better. It is sweet but may
not be the same everything for everybody. Everyone's turn of sweetness does come in the process and at the end of the day when you are committed to a cause, these things are minor things to be taken in strike.

So food safety, I see these critical to the implementation of the Act and one of the biggest problem that we have, when we talk about India, is that we have huge geographically inequities in India particularly relating to capacities. And it is that capacity implementation which makes it uneven across the country. I don't this so this is an intent, this is just a capacity to implement, so we need to also, journey see how we encourage them to create a better capacity so that the implementation of the Act is uniform across the country.

And there are several seasons why the Act is uneven in the country. One of the issues raised in the sessions just before me was, different agencies behaving difficulties in different parts of the country. It is bound to happen. With the kinds of difference in terms of implementations, in terms of governance, interns of mindset that we have across the country there issue will remain. Again that does not mean that we are moving in the right direction, as long as intent is correct.

There was a huge talk about not just implementing the Act, not just regulating the Act but also hand holding. I am fully with you on that.

The principle charge of the government is to handhold and make sure that the things are better for the Industry. The only request I have is when the government holds out the hand please extend your arm from the Industry firmly and across the board, to accept that a two holding as a collaborative. That is being a two way aff airs rather than the one sided aff air. Unless we are able to do that, I do not think either of that will achieve the goal.

This regulation, in many ways, is not so much about regulating. We talk about self certification. It's about creating the atmosphere where we know that we produce and what is consumed by the Indians should not harm any India. It is about standard setting, it is about quality and where an agency is involved in quality, I don't see why anybody should have complaint in that. And it's not just about the Indian standards, you have heard the presentations as well, it's about International standards harmonization as well.

When you talk about the global India, you can't just be looking beneath. We may have one own peculates, but then there has to be a common clarity in ties up with International standards which we must follows. But at the end of the day, ultimately, any act is what we may perfect. And there will be black sheep, there will be genuine people in the journey and the act must have provisions to part one on the back and may be full others leg otherwise, the Act will not succeed. We have to do the same time; we have to display some amount of firmness because ultimately what we are looking at together is common good for all.
Setting standards is really about getting into an atmosphere where we realize what is good, what is quality and how do we ensure that every Indian gets nutritious food. But out of all, this is one aspect. Making people accountable to this, responsible to this is also a needed task which we need to achieve. And accountability lies on both sides, it does not lie on one side. And accountability according to me is best enforced when it is self inculcated. As long as we feel accountable for one action we will go long. Let us inculcate this spirit of accountability in all of us and try and march together because we are on a journey which is likely to have many hiccups and we have to overcome them together. I do realize that this is the last session of the day and particularly before the dinner, it is exciting. And all of you are very eagerly waiting to listen to the minister. What I really want to convey is that we are all in this together and we will make it a very smooth, successful journey.

Thank you
National Summit on Fortification of Food

16.08.2016

Ms. Anupriya Patil, Minister of State, MoH&FW

Since its world food day, so my greetings to all of you on this auspicious day. It's my pleasure to all of be here today on this occasion and talk about the relevance of fortification of food to improve the nutritional status of our country which is truly the need of the hour considering the horrific sides of the malnourishment level in the country. We know a balanced diet is essential for proper growth and development of all human being from the very early stages of life including the prenatal stage but not many of us understand that the balanced diet must contain both macro as well as micro nutrients and particularly the micronutrients which are responsible for the what functions of our body and their deficiency often results in serious and permanent mental and physical health problems. It is well known fact that simple diet based on common staple foods with little variations are often deficient in these micronutrients. A low consumption of fruits and vegetables further increase the micronutrients deficiencies. The intake of micronutrients in the daily diet is satisfactory such that over 70% of the India population consumes less than 50% of the recommended daily allowance of the micronutrients.

Accordingly to the National family health survey about 70% of the preschool children suffer from anaemia caused by iron deficiency and 57% of the preschool children have subclinical Vitamin A deficiency. The neural tube defects (NTDs) are the most common congenital malformations with an incidence that varies between 0.5 to 8 per thousand births. And it is estimated that 50-70% of these birth defects are preventable.

The control of micronutrient deficiencies is an essential part of the over thing effort of the gov. of India particularly of the Ministry of Health & Family welfare to fight hunger and malnutrition in the country. We may not have worked very satisfactorily in the past but the good part is that we are continuously trying extremely hard. And there are several ways to address this problem by way of diversification of diet, supplementation of food and fortification of food which we are focusing at today.

Food fortification is the proven and effective strategy to meet the nutritional needs of the large number of people across various sections of the society particularly the poor, the underprivileged as well as the vulnerable such as pregnant women and young children.
Fortification required neither changes in the existing food habits and patterns nor individual compliance. It’s a socially, culturally acceptable phenomenon and does not alter the characteristics of the food. It can be introduced quickly and can produce nutritional benefits for the population in short period of time. It’s safe and cost effective which is the best part of it and especially if the advantage is taken of the existing technology and the delivery platforms.

Fortification reinforces and supports the existing nutritional improvement approach to prevent the micronutrient deficiencies thereby complementing other approaches to improve health and nutrition.

Currently wheat flour, rice, oil, milk, salt and process foods are being considered for the purpose of fortification. And it also used not just in India but in many countries across the world in order to improve the nutritional status of their populations and has shown wonderful results.

Fortification of salt with Iodine, for example, is a very well accepted pacific around the world.

Countries which have evaluated the folic acid fortification of flour lower even showed a decline in the normal tube defects.

I am indeed very happy to see that to meet this huge challenge of micronutrient deficiency in our country, the FSSAI has taken the lead and organized this 2-day long submit in partnership with all the stakeholders including the government, the NGOs, the Industry and academic institutions. As all other speakers before we have said, it is a collective responsibility and we all have to come forward,

We are still very nascent considering the fact the FSS Act is as old as the year 2006 and the Food Safety Regulations were enforced in the year, 2011.

I am sure appropriate regulations and Standards for food fortification formulated by the FSSAI for staple foods such as wheat flour, oil, milk, salt will go a long way in meeting the nutritional securities of our citizens.

Furthermore, collaborative efforts through various schemes of the gov. such as integrated child development scheme (ICDS), the mid day meal program and the public distribution system will ensure the proper supply of the fortified foods to particularly the vulnerable, poor, under privileged sections of the society.

I am planned this commendable initiative by FSSAI and wish them all the best of this 2 day long discussion, which is aimed at providing food and nutrition security to all countryman.

We have a long way to go in increasing the awareness of general population about the good that fortified foods can do to us.
The manufacturing sale as well as the inventual consumption of the fortified food items needs to be encouraged. I am sure we can do it together and fight off the hidden hunger and malnutrition.
FSSAI proposes new standards for frozen veggies, jams

According to the draft, standards have been framed for canned tomatoes, tomato juice, frozen vegetables and fruit products, including commonly used canned tomatoes, frozen peas and jams.

Food regulator FSSAI has proposed new standards for frozen vegetables and processed fruit products, including commonly used canned tomatoes, frozen peas and jams.

In a draft regulation, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has invited suggestions from all stakeholders.

"The framing of standards for new products is a continuous process. In this, we have drafted quality norms for commonly used frozen vegetables and fruit products," FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal told PTI.

According to the draft, standards have been framed for canned tomatoes, tomato juice, frozen beans, cauliflower, peas and spinach. Similarly, the regulator has come out with benchmarks for jams, fruit jellies and marmalades.

The standards relate to limits for metallic contaminants in these products. In the draft, FSSAI has specified that these products will have to follow the packaging and labelling norms of the regulator. Food additives used in these products should be permitted by the regulator.
Recently, FSSAI came out with a host of initiatives to promote safe food at homes, schools, offices, eateries and religious places, besides a national survey for assessing milk quality.

The idea of launching the 10 new initiatives is to create "a culture of food safety" in the country.

Commemorating the 10th anniversary of enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, FSSAI had said the new initiatives would focus on safe and nutritious food at home, school, workplace, religious places, on trains and railway stations, at restaurants and other places.

FSSAI will provide a green book to every household and create a dedicated website for safe/nutritious food at home.

Similarly, for schools, it will prepare a negative list of high fat, sugar and salt foods (commonly referred to as junk food), seeking to ensure food safety and nutrition. It plans to make licence from FSSAI compulsory for food businesses involved in mid-day meal scheme.
FSSAI proposes new limits for additives in alcoholic drinks

BY PTI | UPDATED: JUN 29, 2016, 10.56 PM IST

FSSAI proposes new limits for additives in alcoholic drinks
NEW DELHI: Food regulator FSSAI today proposed fixing limits for various additives for alcoholic beverages, including wine and others.

"Calling for suggestions, views, comments etc from stakeholders within a period of 30 days on the draft notification related to additional additives, enzymes, processing aids for use in alcoholic beverages including alcohol free and low alcoholic counterparts," FSSAI said in the notification.

The regulator has also included new additives in the list.

In the notification, the regulator has mentioned the list of additives or enzymes which can be used for production of grape wine and distilled spirituous beverages containing more than 15 per cent alcohol.

Earlier, the FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal had said that the regulator has finalised a list of food additives and standards with respect to alcoholic beverages and the standards are in alignment with International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) standards. Meanwhile, in a separate draft notification, the food regulator has also invited suggestions from stakeholders on standards of non-carbonated water-based beverages. These non-carbonated beverages may have sugar, liquid glucose, fructose, honey, fruits and vegetables extracts among others along with water.
Functional foods will have to clear strict checks to hit market

NEW DELHI: Health supplements, nutraceuticals, probiotics and other functional food products will have to go through a stringent regulatory scanner and comply with specific norms before entering the market. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has come up with a gazette notification issuing benchmark standards covering as many as eight different categories of foods.

The regulations, in line with international food safety standards, make it mandatory for food business operators to declare essential composition of their products on the packaging. This includes a detailed declaration of nutrient as well organism content in products like nutraceuticals and probiotics.

Besides, the regulations also pertain to claims and labelling. For instance, these items that often claim health benefits will have to mandatorily differentiate themselves from pharmaceutical products by declaring on the label "not for medicinal use". Health supplements, on the other hand, will have to carry the words "health Supplement" on their label. Similarly, FSSAI has also defined different categories and set norms for claims for each of the category. For instance, if a "nutrient content claim" is being made in case of food products falling under health supplement categories, the individual nutrient content shall not be less than 15% of the recommended daily allowance, as per the FSSAI.
Product approvals in future will be in compliance with the new regulations, an official said. The FSSAI has given a year's time to food operators to comply with the regulations, which will be effective from January 1, 2018.

The regulations assume significance with increasing number of functional foods entering the Indian market.
FSSAI finalises list of 11,000 food additives

Removes potassium bromate, cyclamates from the list

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which was in the process of harmonising Indian food standards with the international CODEX standards, has now finalised a list of 11,000 permissible food additives.

Industry players believe this will ease the way for new product launches in the country, which is a longstanding grievance of the industry. In a statement, the food regulator said, “With this, the FSSAI has achieved a major landmark in setting of the standards for various foods in the country.”

Industry players believe this will help strengthen the position of India as a global hub for food processing industry and help move the industry to ingredient-based regime.

In addition, the FSSAI said that it removed potassium bromate, which is used in bread and bakery products and cyclamates, which is used in jams, jellies, marmalades, dairy-based drinks and confectionary, from the list of permissible additives. The bread manufacturers association had earlier voluntarily decided to withdraw the use of potassium bromate.

The draft of these standards was released for public consultation in October last year. About 8,000 food additives were operationalised in December, and now it has been updated to standards for 11,000 food additives.

“The FSSAI has convened a meeting of the Scientific Committee...to discuss other issues which have been received with respect to additives after these were finalised. The committee will also discuss the issue of use of potassium iodate in the food in the country,” the statement added.
Govt wants visible, readable details on packed food items

Changes on the anvil

- The government plans to adopt the US system of using 1.6 mm font size to specify name, address, weight, date of manufacturing and retail price on packaged food.
- The size may increase from current 1 mm to 1.5 mm for 200 grams/ml pack. For 200-500 grams/ml packs, it will be 4 mm and for 500 grams/ml or bigger packs, the size will be 8 mm.
- Bar-code or a similar mark to identify the country of origin on food products may be introduced.
- The maximum quantity of packaged food items may be increased up to 50 kg/litres from the existing 25 kg/litres.

The government is planning to amend the 2011 commodities packaging rules to ensure the details on the packaged food items are more visible and readable and also wants to incorporate barcode-kind of system to protect consumers from spurious products.

The Consumer Affairs Ministry has held several rounds of discussions to amend the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 in the interest of consumers. Even the industry and public have demanded changes to the rules.

“Rule 7 specifies about the font size of the declaration but most companies do not follow strictly. In smaller packs, the font size is too small for consumers to read. So, we have decided to adopt the US standard on font size,” a senior Consumer Affairs Ministry official told PTI.
Right now, the font size of the declaration such as name, address, net commodity, date of manufacturing and retail price is less than 1 mm. “The US follows 1.6 mm size. But we are planning to keep 1.5 mm for a pack of 200 grams/ml.”

The font size for a packed food item containing more than 200 grams/ml up to 500 grams/ml would be increased from 2 mm to 4 mm and for above 500 grams/ml, the font size would be doubled to 8 mm, he said. Besides, the ministry is considering introducing bar-code or any such mark to identify food products are made in India or other country to curb sale of fake food items in the country. That apart, the ministry is considering increasing maximum quantity of packaged food items up to 50 kg/litres from the existing 25 kg/litres.

“For smaller packs, consumers have to pay more. So, we are thinking of allowing some commodities like rice, atta and others to be packed up to 50 kg/litres. This will bring down the cost on consumers,” the official explained. The ministry had last amended the rule in 2015. — PTI
FSSAI drafts guidelines for direct-selling firms

Food regulator FSSAI today issued a draft guidelines for direct selling companies engaged in food business, proposing mandatory licenses from either central or state authority, besides spelling out mechanisms for consumer grievance redressal and product recalls.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has sought comments from stakeholders by February 2 on its "draft guidelines for operations of direct selling food business operators (FBOs)". In its first guidelines for direct selling FBOs to ensuring food safety, FSSAI said: "...It is necessary to address all ways in which food is supplied to consumers, including sale of food by direct selling companies."

Stating that food supplied through direct selling must meet same requirements as food sold in shops, the regulator said: "It is necessary to ensure that direct selling FBOs should have mechanism to help the general public to address the issues to consume, safe and wholesome food supplied through operation of this model."

According to the guideline, a direct FBO has been defined as an entity selling food product directly to consumers or through network of their agents, representatives, consultants, direct distributors.

FSSAI said direct selling FBOs would require to take license from it for activities related to the business, including manufacturing, import, distribution and retailing among others.

If the FBOs are operating in more than one state, then they would need to take licenses from the central licensing authority for their network of agents and salesman.

As per the draft guidelines, the FBOs would have to maintain proper records either manually or electronically of their business dealings, with complete details of their products, services, terms of contract, prices, income plan and details of direct selling agents among others.
On the issue of consumer of complaints, FSSAI said the direct selling FBOs would be responsible for maintaining effective grievance redressal mechanism and will have to address issues within seven working days.

Moreover, the FBOs will be liable for grievances arising out of sale of products by them or their agents.

On products recalls, the regulator proposed direct selling FBOs and their agents should immediately comply with recall orders issued by FSSAI and provide details to the authority.

The FBOs would also have to submit an undertaking stating that their agents would comply with Food Safety and Standards Act and rules and regulations made under this law. They would be liable to sampling of food product at any point.

Last year, FSSAI had also issued draft guidelines for food business operators in e-commerce sector.
FSSAI wants to regulate quality of tap water

Health issue: FSSAI chief Agarwal said the regulator will examine the Central Consumer Protection Council’s recommendation.

Having exercised its will over private companies, both domestic and multinational, India’s food quality regulator has now set its eyes on regulating water utilities controlled by the government.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is examining the possibility of holding municipal authorities and other agencies such as state water supply boards accountable for the quality of water they supply.

“The Central Consumer Protection Council (an apex body that advises the government on the consumer-related issues) has expressed concern over the quality of drinking water supplied through the pipeline and has recommended mandatory standards for drinking water, irrespective of its source,” said Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer at FSSAI.

The regulator is yet to take a call on how to bring water supplied by municipal authorities and other government authorities such as Delhi Jal Board under its purview. The Central Consumer Protection Council, in its recommendation, said FSSAI should formulate standards for water through the pipeline and should monitor quality.
“We’ll examine the recommendation and the complexities,” said Agarwal. At present, FSSAI only has standards for packaged drinking water.

Just about 32% of India’s households have access to treated tap water (supplied through pipelines) and around 11.5% households get untreated water, according to the 2011 Census.

About 62% of households living in urban areas, which constitute 31.16% of India’s total population, have access to treated tap water (mainly supplied by municipal corporations and other government agencies).

While Agarwal declined to divulge details, the regulator may follow the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) on drinking water quality to protect public health. The WHO guidelines, accepted worldwide, prescribe development and implementation of risk management strategies to ensure the safety of drinking-water supplies through control of hazardous constituents in water.

The safety and quality of drinking water supplied by Delhi Jal Board has been questioned. In April, Union consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan said drinking water supplied by Delhi Jal Board was not safe for consumption.

Residents of New Delhi, the national capital city, do not think they can drink water supplied by Delhi Jal Board.

“Dirty water is a regular feature and we have to reach out to the authorities. We have to purchase purifying systems because the water is not fit for drinking. If it was brought under the food standard authorities, it would benefit us and would also ensure that the municipal authorities are brought under the scanner,” said Dashrath Sahu, a resident of Badarpur in Delhi, who works as an office clerk.

Photographer and communications professional Love Verma, a resident of south Delhi’s Lajpat Nagar, said: “Drinking? I even doubt if this water is okay for bathing. In rainy season, the piped water gets mixed with sewage. We use a purifier for drinking water. Even the bottled water that we get in the market, I have doubts if those are safe for consumption,” said Verma.

“I am not aware of anything that FSSAI may be doing. We already follow required standards to provide safe water,” said R.S. Tyagi, member (water supply), Delhi Jal Board. Its chief executive officer Keshav Chandra could not reached for comments before the time of going to press.

India’s water purifier market was estimated to exceed 7,000 crore or about 15 million units, in 2015, according to a 2012 study by the industry body Associated Chambers of Commerce of India.
From April onwards, FSSAI has been tough on companies selling drinking water in packaged form. Of the total 5,842 registered water packaging units in India, said FSSAI, 1,495 have both a licence from FSSAI and certificate from the Bureau of Indian Standards (the national standards body), while the remaining 4,347 units only have BIS certification.

FSSAI has asked all drinking water packaging units to procure a licence from FSSAI to continue operations.

“No person shall manufacture, sell or exhibit for sale, Natural Mineral Water and Packaged Drinking water, except under the BIS Standard Mark,” according to the FSSAI regulation.

In May, Mint reported the food regulator’s desire to bring places of worship under its ambit to ensure safety of food items served by temples.

Meanwhile, the Food Safety and Standards Act is undergoing amendments. “It will take time to finalize a holistic amendment. We expect to have a consolidated view based on recommendations and required legislations, may be in another six months,” said Agarwal.

The Act, after amendment, will include better “co-ordination mechanism amongst all stake holders, simplified standard-setting mechanism among other things”, added the FSSAI CEO.

FSSAI is also allowing imports of special food items meant for children with “Inborn errors of Metabolism”. These food items are manufactured by only a few companies such as Swiss packaged food company Nestle SA, American healthcare company Abbott Laboratories and French dairy firm Danone SA.

“Treatment of these metabolic disorders requires early intervention including dietary control. In view of the seriousness of the issue, FSSAI is taking expedient actions to provide a unique platform for parents to find timely medical support and treatment. We’ll engage leading hospitals like All India Institute of Medical Science and have asked these companies to offer these food products at a subsidized price,” said Agarwal. Together, the companies will offer a subsidy of 5 crore a year for these food items. However, the government has no plan to bring these food items under its own subsidy schemes.

India’s food quality regulator is celebrating its 10th anniversary. “We have taken a 10-point agenda to ensure safe food across the country. We need to educate consumers, and the ones involved in production of food. We need to ensure safety at the point of manufacturing. We need to align our efforts to ensure safe food for our citizens,” said
Agarwal. The regulator, said Agarwal, exists because there are food companies who are doing business. “It can’t act adversarial,” he added.

FSSAI was in the limelight last year for cracking down on Nestle India Ltd after the company’s popular Maggi noodles were suspected to contain excess lead. The food safety agency ordered a ban on the noodles in June 2015, but the Bombay high court lifted the ban in August after the product cleared court-mandated lab tests.
FSSAI may join hands with ad council to check misleading claims by food firms

Pawan Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI

ASCI already works with the Department of Consumer Affairs on misleading ads in sectors such as agriculture and food, health, education, housing, e-commerce and financial services.

NEW DELHI, MAY 27:

To curb misleading health and nutritional claims by food processing companies, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has joined hands with ad watchdog Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI).

Speaking to BusinessLine FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said: “Since ASCI already keeps track of advertisements that make misleading health and nutritional claims, they can give us periodic alerts regarding such issues.”
ASCI already works with the Department of Consumer Affairs on misleading advertisements in six priority sectors, including agriculture and food, health, education, housing, financial services as well as e-commerce. Last year, the Department appointed ASCI to monitor the GAMA (Grievances against Misleading Advertisements) web portal to process complaints.

Similar joint-regulation initiatives might be undertaken by ASCI and FSSAI to protect consumers from misleading, false and unsubstantiated claims by food companies.

ASCI can first take the ads up with businesses that make misleading claims and if the food business operators do not take corrective actions, then the FSSAI can look into the issue and appropriate measures can be taken, Agarwal said.

ASCI Secretary-General Shweta Purandare said that the council is in dialogue with FSSAI on the issue.

**Labelling issue**

Meanwhile, FSSAI is also taking up the issue of labelling. “Ingredients should be so written that a buyer need not necessarily be a science expert to interpret it. I do believe that labelling should inform the consumer in a manner that it does not require a high level of expertise. Efforts have to be made towards simplification. We are also looking into international best practices in this regard and studying how far it is practical to adopt them,” Agarwal added.

The scientific panel for labelling norms has recently gone through the various issues and has come up with recommendations, which are coming up for approval soon, he said.

While ASCI works more on self regulation, FSSAI will have more teeth with the soon-to-be-notified recall policy spelling out a proper mechanism.

The latest data show that ASCI’s Consumer Complaints Council upheld complaints against 90 out of 156 advertisements in March and 10 of these were against food and beverage companies.
FSSAI proposes norms to hold e-tailers responsible for food quality

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has come up with a draft notification, putting the onus of quality of food products on e-commerce marketplaces that sell such products. The guidelines, released on Tuesday for public comments, include any online platform or e-commerce site of manufacturer involved in the food business in any form. The guidelines have been formed on the basis of discussions that the regulator had with the food business operators (FBO) on March 18.

Under the guidelines, any e-commerce FBO that sells, distributes, delivers, imports, stores, packages or manufactures food items would "have to obtain licence from the central licensing authority for the entire supply chain, including its head office, registered office, transportation, storage, distribution".

E-commerce entities providing only listing facility for sellers, restaurant owners, distributors, vendors, distributors and manufacturers would not have to obtain licences or registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act). They have to ensure that no misleading information or false claims about or by the sellers, vendors, importers, manufacturers or the food products are made on their platform. "The e-commerce companies shall clearly specify on their platform that liability of any violation of the FSS Act and applicable rules and regulations made there under would be with sellers, restaurants, vendors, importers or manufacturers of the food products," said the notification. In line with the FSS Act, e-commerce firms would have to ensure the safety of food articles sold on their platform. Online firms would also have to get into legal agreement with sellers complying with the FSS Act.

The food regulator has been working to regulate the e-commerce companies for the past few months. However, lack of enough precedence at the global level had delayed the process, its chief executive officer Pawan Kumar Agarwal said last month. While most of the major e-commerce firms dealing with food items have already obtained licences, a set of guidelines to regulate their operations was required, Agarwal added.
Currently, there are around 20 e-commerce firms that focus on selling food items. These include Big Basket, Swiggy and Grofers. E-commerce giants such as Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal, too, offer food items on their platforms.

The guidelines also specify the requirements for display and listing. Apart from providing pictorial display of the food products, sellers would have to ensure their licence or registration obtained from FSSAI is viewable to the consumers. Like offline retailers, products sold by online sellers would also be "liable to sampling at any point of the supply chain". The firms are restrained from charging any extra money to its consumers seeking any information such as storage conditions, disclaimers and warnings about the food products.

According to the draft guidelines, any consumer complaint has to be intimated to the sellers immediately by the e-commerce firm and aggrieved customers would have to be directed to the consumer complaint cell of the manufacturer. "The e-commerce FBO will cooperate with the consumers to enable satisfactory resolution of the complaint by sharing with him all relevant information including seller details," the notification added.

In case of any product recall, the online platform provider would have to comply with FSSAI’s rules by immediately de-listing the product in question.
FSSAI drafts guidelines for direct-selling firms

Food regulator FSSAI today issued a draft guidelines for direct selling companies engaged in food business, proposing mandatory licenses from either central or state authority, besides spelling out mechanisms for consumer grievance redressal and product recalls. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has sought comments from stakeholders by February 2 on its "draft guidelines for operations of direct selling food business operators (FBOs)".

In its first guidelines for direct selling FBOs to ensuring food safety, FSSAI said: "...It is necessary to address all ways in which food is supplied to consumers, including sale of food by direct selling companies."

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The FBOs would also have to submit an undertaking stating that their agents would comply with Food Safety and Standards Act and rules and regulations made under this law. They would be liable to sampling of food product at any point.

Last year, FSSAI had also issued draft guidelines for food business operators in e-commerce sector.
FSSAI to take strict action against food adulteration

NEW DELHI: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is taking a stern view of any adulteration or lapse in hygiene in the food business. At a summit on Monday, its chief executive, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, said, "We will amend regulations to make it mandatory for food business operators to have at least one person trained in food safety."

FSSAI also launched a food safety training and certification programme (FoSTaC), which has 19 short courses — from basic to advanced and specialised courses for street food vendors, restaurants chefs, caterers, food business operators as well as the general public.

The regulator unveiled a food smart consumer portal for registering grievances in order to strengthen its redressal system, along with releasing a guidance document for food handlers and regulatory staff.

FSSAI has created safe and nutritious food mascots — Master and Miss Sehat — superheroes who spread awareness among children. FSSAI will soon come out with new regulations relating to labelling of packaged food products and incorporate the expert panel's suggestions for reducing consumption of fat, sugar and salt.
'Carcinogenic' additive in bread banned by regulator

New Delhi: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India on Monday banned use of potassium bromate as a food additive after Centre for Science and Environment alleged the presence of the substance in bread can cause cancer.

Meanwhile, the food regulator has also referred the matter for further investigation to a scientific panel.

Last month, the regulator had recommended to the health ministry suggesting removal of potassium bromate from the list of permissible food additives after a study by the CSE found the substance can be carcinogenic.

The CSE study had found that 84% of 38 commonly available brands of pre-packaged breads, including pav and buns, tested positive for potassium bromate and potassium iodate. These two food additives are banned in many countries and listed as "hazardous" for public health.

According to the CSE, potassium bromate typically increases dough strength, leads to higher rising and uniform finish to baked products while potassium iodate is a flour treatment agent. Following the CSE study, a bread manufacturers’ association had said they will stop using controversial potassium bromate and potassium iodate as additives.
FSSAI launches Rs 482 cr scheme to upgrade food testing

NEW DELHI: Food safety regulator FSSAI today announced a Rs 482-crore scheme to strengthen the food testing infrastructure in the country.

"The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has rolled out a major scheme for strengthening of Food Testing Infrastructure in the country at an estimated cost of Rs 482 crore, in the light of the recent observations by High Court, Mumbai, regarding the urgent need to upgrade food testing Laboratories in India," FSSAI said in a state..

The committee also approved the proposal for strengthening the referral food laboratory at Central Food Technology Research Institute (CFTRI) through provision of latest equipment and facilities.

Introduction of these equipment facilities would enhance the testing capability of CFTRI for adulteration of honey and pesticide and antibiotic residues in food samples.

Under this scheme, 45 State/UT food testing labs (at least one in each State/UT with a provision of two labs ..
FSSAI announces initiatives to promote safe food culture

Aiming to create a culture of food safety in the country, regulator FSSAI today announced a host of initiatives to promote safe food at homes, schools, offices, eateries and religious places, besides a national survey for assessing milk quality.

Commemorating the 10th anniversary of enactment of Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, the FSSAI said it will launch ten new initiatives that seek to connect people of all age groups for ensuring safe food through an integrated approach.

"This bouquet of 10 initiatives focused on safe and nutritious food at home, school, workplace, religious places, in trains and railway stations, in restaurants and other places," Health Ministry said in a statement.

FSSAI will provide a green book to every household and create a dedicated website for safe and nutritious food at home.

Similarly for schools, it will prepare a negative list of high fat, sugar and salt foods (commonly referred as junk food), seeking to ensure food safety and nutrition in and around schools, including lunch box and canteens.

It plans to make licence from FSSAI compulsory for food businesses involved in mid-day meal scheme. For offices, FSSAI said the canteens and cafeterias should be registered/licenced with the food regulator. The establishment should also ensure monthly testing of kitchens, water and equipment.

As far as religious places are concerned, FSSAI said it is engaging with the management of places of worships to help them implement the Food Safety Management System (FSMS).
Siddhivinayak temple in Mumbai has already adopted FSMS, while Saibaba temple in Shirdi is in the process of doing so for their kitchens.

Noting that food safety is an important health and economic issue, Health Minister J P Nadda said, "Provisions of safe food should become a part of ingrained culture in our country."

He said the adoption of global food safety standards would boost exports of agro-products and also provide better returns to farmers for their produce.

Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Pawan Agarwal said all these 10 initiatives have been developed collaboratively over the past few months along with other stakeholders and partners.

"States would be facilitated to implement them on pilot basis over the next few months and thereafter national roll out of these initiatives would be done possibly by next year," Agarwal said.

Apart from these initiatives, FSSAI also announced plans to conduct national milk quality survey and frame standards for food fortification, organic food. It will also simplify the registration and licencing regulations.

FSSAI will also take steps to bridge standards divide from farm to trade and to rediscover the rich culinary heritage of India.

It also launched food safety display board that would help connect consumers directly with food safety officers. Twelve corporates including Mother Dairy, Haldiram, Star Bucks, Burger King, among others, have already volunteered to display this board at their 1,300 outlets.

Addressing a FSSAI conference late last evening, Health Minister J P Nadda had said the Centre will support the state governments in capacity building and setting up high quality labs for proper enforcement of food safety standards.

"We are all for capacity building not only at the national level...We are working to have high quality labs. We are working to support states (in setting up) high quality laboratories," Nadda said.

The government will fine tune the food safety standards to make it more meaningful, Nadda said. "It is (fine tuning) a continuous process. We will be doing it," the Minister said.

He emphasised on more awareness programmes to promote safe food at home, schools, offices and eateries.
Nadda said the food standards act is a paradigm shift from regulatory regime under the provisions of Food Adulteration Act to self-regulatory and facilitatory regime. "Now, basic groundwork is done. We are ready for a big leap forward," Nadda said.

The minister emphasised upon two-way communication between the food businesses and the regulator. He advised that the authority should be fully aware of the need and concerns of small food businesses as well in its work of standard formulation and compliance.

FSSAI Chairperson Ashish Bahuguna said, "We have completed 10 formative years of this act and are now striving to work towards a collective approach for building safe food culture in India because food safety cannot be ensured by enforcement alone".
The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has now decided to take on a new task of an educator.

As part of its integrated programme to promote safe and nutritious food at various levels, the FSSAI is running a pilot project to train domestic workers. Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said that as part of the various citizen outreach programmes, FSSAI is running a pilot programme in collaboration with the Domestic Sector Skill Council and resident welfare associations at New Moti Bagh (New Delhi) to train domestic workers to make them aware about practices that need to be adopted for safe, hygienic and nutritious food at home.

“This is one of the pilot projects that have been launched to empower citizens and promote awareness and education about food safety. We want to integrate our programme with the everyday lives of people,” Agarwal said.

FSSAI last year had launched an integrated programme called “10@10” initiatives to promote food safety at home, schools, workplaces, places of worship, street food vendors among others.
The regulator hopes learning from this pilot will help develop a scalable model of training and educating domestic workers which can be expanded to other regions of the country. This initiative is being undertaken under the aegis of the PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana under Skill India.

Manish Kumar, Managing Director and CEO, National Skill Development, told BusinessLine that, “We have had RPL (recognition of prior learning) courses for street vendors and domestic maids on how to maintain hygiene in food.”

He said this work is being done in collaboration with its partner agencies.

Besides this pilot, FSSAI has also been working with various experts to develop books and e-learning materials that will educate citizens about simple tests that they can conduct to check on adulterants for some of the commonly used ingredients.

“We want food safety and nutrition to become a social movement that is not just driven by the regulator but all the stakeholders including citizens,” Agarwal added.

Food safety and nutrition education and training can also be gained through FSSAI’s FoSTaC (Food Safety and Training) Portal as well.
FSSAI launches ‘Food Safety Concern’ to receive complaints about packed food

FSSAI has launched ‘Food Safety Concern’ on its website to receive complaints related to packed food or even food outlets including roadside eateries.

FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said the regulator would first forward the complaint to the restaurant or the company and follow up by sending a food inspector. Photo: Pradeep Gaur/Mint

New Delhi: Upset after finding an insect in your packed food? Or may be the absence of labelling to indicate whether the food is vegetarian or non-vegetarian?

You can do something about it—complain on the website of the food safety regulator, which will ensure swift action.

With a message that safe packed food is every consumer’s right, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched a section, “Food Safety Concern,” on its website to receive complaints related to packed food or even food outlets including roadside eateries.
Under this section, a consumer can complain about a product if she finds that its shelf-life had expired, or that it had been adulterated, or didn’t contain vegetarian/non-vegetarian labelling. The presence of dust particles, insects or fungus can be grounds for a complaint too. Consumers can even post a picture of the product with the grievance.

Last week, FSSAI announced a “10@10” programme to promote safe food at all places including homes, schools, offices, eateries and even religious places while commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006.

It announced that it will launch 10 new initiatives that seek to connect people of all age groups for ensuring safe food. Giving citizens a voice and a transparent system to register their complaints is part of that programme.

“This is among one of the 10 initiatives that we launched last week and herein our focus is consumer outreach. It’s a big step towards involving public at large and it is the first time that such a step is being taken,” said Pawan Agarwal, chief executive officer (CEO) at FSSAI.

Agarwal said the regulator would first forward the complaint to the restaurant or the company named in it and follow up by sending a food inspector to the premises of the alleged offender.

“Over the time with a large number of complaints, a database would be created and we would get a general trend about a particular place or kind of food. That trend will also help us in carrying out inspections. We will also note how restaurants and companies are responding to consumers’ concerns,” Agarwal added.

FSSAI has been actively trying to enforce food safety regulations in the past year or so. It started with a ban on Nestle India Ltd’s Maggi noodles in June 2015. It also said it was examining the possibility of regulating quality of water piped to household taps to hold municipal authorities and agencies such as state water supply boards accountable for the quality of water they supply.

In May, the food regulator banned a potentially cancer-causing chemical, potassium bromate, used widely as an additive in brands of packaged breads and the bread used in ready-to-eat burgers and pizzas. The FSSAI decision came after a study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) named it as one of two chemicals that could cause cancer.
FSSAI launches Food Fortification Resource Centre

The FSSAI on Thursday launched a Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC) to provide technical support, advocacy, and expertise in all aspects of food fortification during a special meeting, which was attended by Bill Gates.

In the meeting, the founder of Microsoft and trustee of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Gates, extended his support to Indian government's new initiatives to curb the problem of malnutrition in the country.

"I am encouraged by the government’s new initiatives to advance India’s nutrition goals. In particular, I congratulate FSSAI on the launch of the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulation (2016) and continued improvement on salt iodisation," Bill Gates was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the FSSAI.

The meeting was also attended by secretaries of eight different ministries, including Health, Woman and Child Development and Human Resources and Development, along with members of Tata Trust at the headquarters of Food, Safety and Standards of Authority of India (FSSAI).

An online portal of FCTC was also launched during the meeting, which would function as a knowledge dissemination and interaction platform across stakeholders.

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Over a quarter of the world's vitamin A deficient pre-school children are in India. About 70 per cent of the schoolchildren and over 50 per cent of women suffer from anaemia caused by iron deficiency in the country.
According to FSSAI, the standards and logo for fortified foods that were released in October already has become a rallying point for large-scale food fortification.

Several states are already in the advanced stages of adopting fortified foods in government programmes.
New standards for fortifying foods released

NEW DELHI, OCT. 16:

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Sunday released new standards on fortification on food. The guidelines are meant to regulate the fortification of food, especially packaged food, with essential micronutrients to counter rising malnutrition in the country.

Anupriya Patel, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, while releasing the standards, said that fortification of food is seen as a culturally acceptable method that can be introduced quickly and economically with significant advantages.

She added that the government, on its part, would ensure schemes such as Integrated Child Development Scheme, the midday meal scheme and public distribution system are mandated to buy and distribute fortified food to end malnutrition.

Changing food patterns are seen as one of the leading causes of micronutrient deficiency in the country, Ashish Bahuguna, Chairman of FSSAI said. Fortification of food is accepted as an efficient and economic way of reducing deficiency according to experts. In India iodine-fortified salt has shown success in curbing incidents of deficiency related diseases such as hypothyroidism and goiter.

Bahuguna said that while India has achieved success in boosting food production to the point that it is now an exporter of several food products, it has not been able to battle the hidden hunger of malnutrition. Fortification of commonly-eaten foods, in addition to encouraging balanced diets, would help the country fight this problem, he said.

Pawan Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer of FSSAI said that some of the food products that are going to be fortified with immediate effect are wheat flour, rice, oil and milk, besides salt.

Agarwal, however, admitted that the large-scale production, processing and packaging of some of the food products, especially wheat flour and rice, by the unorganised sector
would make implementation a challenge. The standards are expected to see minor changes following stakeholder consultations.

Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, however, also warned against adulteration of food, which he berated as a common and accepted malpractice. Standards around fortified food need to ensure there are strict laws around purity, he said.

Hameed Nuru, Representative and Country Director, World Food Programme, meanwhile stressed that the cost of ignoring malnutrition is high — an estimated $3.5 trillion annually. He said every dollar spent on fortifying food to combat malnutrition is estimated to give a return of $30. “So, fortifying is the smart thing to do,” he said.