The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has proposed to prohibit the use of genetically-modified (GM) techniques for the production of the meat of animals and poultry birds.

It issued a recent draft notification, titled Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Amendment Regulations, 2017, relating to meat and meat products, fish and fishery products, microbiological requirement for meat and extension of scope of proprietary food.

In it, the apex food regulator also directed food business operators (FBOs) to refrain from slaughtering and processing animals for the production of meat of porcine (pig) origin at facilities where the slaughter and processing of other animals for the production of their meat takes place, and prohibited the use of cows or their progeny...
for the production of meat and/or bone meal, internal organs, blood meal and tissues of animals.

The notification also stated that it should be ensured that even imported meat products were compliant with all the regulations before they reached the market, and they should be checked and certified accordingly.

Welcoming the move, Fauzan Alavi, general secretary, All India Meat and Livestock Exporters’ Association (AIMLEA), Mumbai, said, “It is always welcome if such regulations come into force. Health and hygiene regulations will insure neater, cleaner and healthier meat for the customers, which is a very good thing.”

“And why only meat? Every food item available in market for consumption, be it milk, vegetables or street food, should be regulated in a uniform and professional manner. Health and hygiene should not be compromised,” he added.

Alavi said, “In fact, as vegetables and milk are daily consumables, we eat more vegetables than meat on a regular basis. So, it is my request to the government to first look into the various means used to adulterate them to earn higher profits.”

“As far as meat is concerned, it can only be either clean or unhealthy, so more stringent regulations are needed for other products than they are for meat,” he added.
Meanwhile, the notification covered all kinds of meat and meat products, including pork, beef, chevon (goat meat), mutton (sheep meat), eggs and molluscs.

It included the definitions, scope, types, compositions, safety and hygiene requirements, shelf life, etc. of meat and meat products.

It also provided the composition and safety standards for various meat products, which regulate the moisture, protein and fat content in each product.

### Composition and safety standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Moisture (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>68-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat meat</td>
<td>74-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep meat</td>
<td>68-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry meat</td>
<td>60-74.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shelf life**

FSSAI has also come up with standards for eggs. It has defined eggs as, “Eggs in shell — other than broken, incubated or cooked eggs. These include fresh in-shell eggs as laid by hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, Japanese quail, etc. The edible portion includes the egg yolk and egg white after the removal of the shell.”
Hygiene parameters for eggs

On the hygiene issue concerning the production of eggs, the notification stated, “The key aspects of the hygiene control system are temperature and time issues.”

“From the receipt of the eggs to their handling, sorting and grading, washing, drying, treatment, packing, storage and distribution to the point of consumption, consideration should be given to the time and temperature and humidity conditions for eggs, such that the growth of the pathogenic microorganisms will be minimised, and the safety and suitability of the eggs will not be adversely affected,” it added.

In the fish meat segment, the notice has covered bivalve molluscs, sturgeon caviar, fish sauce, quick frozen fish sticks (fish fingers), fish portions, fish fillets and scallop meat.

It also stated the essential compositions, quality factors, defectives like foreign matter and bones, odours, flavours, textures, colours, parasites, etc., and included the packaging and labelling norms

Packaging and labelling

The notification stated that the products should comply with the packaging and labelling requirements as per the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011, which should also be applicable to pre-packaged products.
Meat ban issue

The old days are coming back to the meat industry. Many people in the industry have opined that illegal slaughterhouses were slowly coming alive again, while the exports remained more or less the same as they were the previous year.

On the issue of the ban, Alavi stated, “The cost of the product for export is low, and there is no profitability in the business in these conditions.”

“The illegal slaughterhouses have started working again, in the similar conditions as they were before the ban. Although the exports are satisfactory, the condition in which they are taking place is a little tentative,” he added.

“There has been no increase in exports as such. However, a loss to the tune of Rs 500-600 crore was incurred following the meat ban and cow vigilante incidents,” said Alavi.

“States like Punjab, Telangana, Bihar and West Bengal are inviting slaughterhouses from Uttar Pradesh, but as of now, there are no visible migrations of slaughterhouses. The local markets are also doing brisk business, but the market rates are still quite high,” he added.