FSSAI notifies caffeine level for energy drinks

New Delhi: India is set to limit caffeine content in energy drinks, a product category that countries like the US do not regulate.

Starting 1 July, companies selling beverages that have caffeine will have to abide by norms defined by the food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), according to a government notification published on Tuesday.

Non-alcoholic beverages with more than 145mg of caffeine per litre will be labelled as ‘caffeinated beverage’ and caffeine content in these beverages should not cross 300mg per litre irrespective of the source of the caffeine, the notification said. Earlier, the regulator had suggested an upper limit of 320mg.

Energy drinks such as Red Bull, Tzinga, Cloud 9 and Monster fall in this category. These products will have to make certain disclosures, including the quantum of caffeine content, on the labels.

Carbonated beverages, including colas, will not fall in the category unless the caffeine content crosses 145mg per litre. Carbonated beverages do not disclose the quantum of caffeine on the labels but state that the beverage contains caffeine.

Besides disclosure of quantum of caffeine in the beverage, companies will have to mention on the labels that one should “consume not more than 500ml per day”. This is to limit how much of a caffeinated beverage a consumer can have in a day.

A 250ml cup of coffee contains 80-150mg of caffeine; a similar quantity of tea has 60mg. Colas usually have 8mg of caffeine per 100ml, according to a 7 November 2013 report by The Guardian. The report added that Red Bull has 30mg of caffeine in 100ml.

FSSAI has also prescribed how much vitamins such as thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B6, vitamin B12 beverages companies can add.

“In respect of ingredients, flavours, sweeteners, food additives, contaminants and microbiological requirement the product shall conform to the standards for carbonated water,” the FSSAI added.

On the labels, companies will have to write “high caffeine”, with details of the quantum, and FSSAI has made it mandatory that they prominently display a cautionary note that says: “Not recommended for children, pregnant and lactating women, persons sensitive to caffeine.”
In 2015, FSSAI banned a few variants of Monster energy drink sold by US-based Monster Beverage Corp., and ordered the recall of Restless Energy Drink sold by Pune-based Pushpam Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd. FSSAI also banned a few variants of Cloud 9 sold by Goldwin Healthcare Pvt. Ltd, and Tzinga, a product by Hector Beverages Pvt. Ltd, for compliance issues. However, almost all products are available in the retail market.

Both Coca-Cola and its rival PepsiCo Inc. launched caffeinated beverages in India, but failed to attract consumers.


According to Coca-Cola website, Burn contains 0.03% of caffeine in a can of 300ml.

“We currently do not have any caffeinated beverage or energy drink in our portfolio,” said a spokesperson for PepsiCo India Pvt. Ltd, the local arm of the beverage maker.

Red Bull India marketing director Avinash Pant did not respond to a query.

Neeraj Kakkar, founder of Hector Beverages, which sells Tzinga energy drink, did not respond to calls and messages seeking comment.

According to a study by FSSAI, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates caffeine content in soft drinks but does not regulate caffeine content in energy drinks as it is considered safe under the US Code of Federal Regulations. The FSSAI study also stated the European Union does not set an upper limit for caffeine but requires only labelling of caffeine content greater than 150mg a kg with “high caffeine content”.

In the same notification, FSSAI has asked companies selling packaged drinking water to use “a blue tint in plastic containers of five litres and above made of poly carbonate and poly terephthalate”. The idea is to prevent the degeneration of the plastic under the effect of sunlight. Mint couldn’t immediately ascertain whether this would raise costs for bottled water companies, and if so, by how much.