FSSAI issues order to omit added sugar quantity from additives section

Dated: 06 October 2017 (Friday)

Mumbai: Binding upon manufacturers of non-alcoholic beverages to mention the quantity of added sugar at two places on their products’ labels - under food additives and the Packaging and Labelling Regulations, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), in its recently-issued gazette notification, has ordered that the provision of declaration of quantity of added sugar be deleted from the additives section.

Beverage labels said an FSSAI official, “In order to avoid duplication, FSSAI has proposed to omit the quantity of added sugar from the additives section on non-alcoholic carbonated beverage labels.”

The notification stated, “It has been proposed that the provision to declare the quantity of added sugar be omitted from the sub-regulations of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, to avoid duplicity of the declaration requirement.”

These regulations may be called the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Eighth Amendment Regulations, 2017.

Supporting FSSAI’s move, Nilesh Lele, secretary, Association of Food Scientists and Technologists (India) [AFST(I)], said, “This move is a positive step from the apex regulator avoiding duplications of regulations. This can be the result of FSSAI’s ongoing review of its existing and upcoming regulations.”
FSSAI Plans to Introduce Doubly Fortified Foods, but it’s Not Meant for All

Dated: 05 October 2017 (Thursday)

Fortified foods are recommended to individuals whose nutrient deficiencies are not managed by dietary supplementation. Earlier this year, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had set up a panel to draft guidelines on food fortification, which is created to curb nutrition deficiencies. The panel had defined strategies to address nutritional needs of the general population and vulnerable groups, besides reviewing the standards for all suitable food fortifying vehicles. Now, FSSAI plans to introduce doubly fortified wheat flour and salt, which are not meant for everyone but only those who suffer from deficiencies of iron and calcium. Familiar with iodised salt or calcium enriched milk? They are a result of food fortification.

Food fortification basically refers to the process of adding essential micronutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, to food staples to make them more nutritious. Fortified foods are recommended to individuals whose nutrient deficiencies are not managed by dietary supplementation due to the insufficient absorption of minerals. However, those who follow a balanced diet, including vegetables, whole grains, legumes, green leafy vegetables, lean meat, fish and dairy products, shouldn't be consuming fortified foods.

However, FSSAI officials didn't receive encouragement from the food industry on this matter. FSSAI's latest move would require food companies to appoint specialized personnel and procure additional raw materials and standardised chemicals for the fortification process.

While fortified foods is a stepping stone towards preventing malnutrition on a large scale, health experts point out the fact that there could be chances of increased toxicity as well, if proper method of fortification is not carried out by the respective food brands. If consumed by those who do not suffer from nutrient deficiencies, it could even lead to side effects and weight gain. Therefore, there needs to be strict guidelines and awareness initiatives related to doubly fortified foods.
A private laboratory in suburban Ranchi has been granted accreditation by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which will allow it to put all those festive mithai under the adulteration scanner, besides testing routine agricultural produce.

Sun-Tech Laboratory in Tupudana, around 15km from the heart of the capital, will offer the authorities, individuals and organisations an alternative platform to screen the quality of edible items. It is arguably the only private lab in the state to earn the FSSAI tag and is expected to unburden the lone state-owned facility in Namkum.

On Mahashtami last month, civil contractor Rahul Kumar had found worms in a packet of fig pedas bought from a prominent confectionery shop, Rajasthan Kalewalaya, in Kutchery. The sweets were priced at Rs 1,000 a kilo.

The district administration acted after Kumar complained to deputy commissioner Manoj Kumar. Food inspector K.P. Singh on Thursday collected samples for testing.

The report is expected in a few days. Now, with Diwali round the corner, adulterated sweets and other food items in the market cannot be ruled out. Unfortunately, the decade-old state lab is mired in problems, including inadequate infrastructure and acute manpower crunch. This is where Sun-Tech hopes to step in.

Preeti Varma, quality manager and in-charge of the Tupudana-based lab, said they were recognised by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) since 2008 and also the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), but an FSSAI tag was a matter of pride for us.

"The gazette of our accreditation was published by FSSAI on September 14. However, we received an intimation on email only in last week of last month. The accreditation has to be renewed every two years," she said, adding that Sun-Tech would be the first private lab in the state to conduct food testing.

So long, the Tupudana facility had been screening building and road construction materials, and minerals in water and soil, among other things. "Earlier, even if we tested food, the report wouldn't have had legal sanctity. Now, that problem is over. If someone is launching a new edible
product, our report can be used for quality labelling. We shall further be able to test samples of food for suspected adulteration," Varma said.

The quality manager informed that they currently had six food analysts on board and testing charges would depend on the nature of profiling one required.

"An adulteration test can start at Rs 500 and go up to over Rs 10,000 if the range of verification includes bio-profiling, component test, nutrition test, label claim, shelf life, inorganic contaminants, animal tissue content and so on," Varma said, stressing that they were empanelled to conduct quality check on all products being sold through the military canteen stores department.

Namkum food lab analyst Chaturbhuj Meena confirmed that Sun-Tech had indeed won FSSAI accreditation, but couldn't say if it was a first in the state. "We are yet to understand all the parameters under which the private agency is empowered to conduct tests," Meena said when asked if the accreditation would lessen the burden on the state lab.