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FSSAI proposes rules for food sold, supplied in schools across India By Sumi Sukanya Dutta

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E-Paper



NEW DELHI: India's food safety regulator, in a first, has prescribed norms to ensure safe and healthy food for children in schools across India.

The draft proposals by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India have recently been put out in public domain for feedback before they are notified.

Named Food Safety and Standards (Safe and Wholesome Food for School Children) Regulations, 2018, the proposal seek to prescribe standards for food items sold or supplied in school mess, kitchens and eateries run by food business operators or even vending machines.

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Under the proposed rules, schools will be asked to make distinction between eatables marked green, yellow and red.

While green will mostly comprise of fresh food, yellow will imply packaged food and red colour will mean food items high in salt, sugar and fat. The draft rules suggest that food and beverages categorised as green or yellow should be largely be on school menus and items labelled as red, with high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) content will be discouraged from being sold or provided inside school campuses.

The proposals also say that a balanced diet for school-goers is one that “should provide about 50-60 per cent of the total calories from carbohydrates (preferably from complex carbohydrates), about 10-15 per cent from proteins and 20-30 per cent from both visible and invisible fat.

“In addition, it should provide such non-nutrients as dietary fibre and antioxidants, which bestow positive health benefits,” reads the draft.

The draft regulation also says that the school authority selling or catering school meals must obtain a license or be registered as a food business operator (FBO) from the concerned licensing authority under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

“At the heart of these regulations is a central idea to make it clear what is healthy for children and what is not,” said FSSAI chief executive officer Pawan Aggarwal.

“We have based the proposed norms on science and highest standards of nutritional requirements for kids as laid down by the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad,” another FSSAI official said.

The proposed regulations have come in the wake of a Delhi High Court directive given to the FSSAI few years back.

The proposed norms also suggest that no person offers, or exposes for sale, HFSS foods to school children in school canteens, mess premises or hostel kitchens.

State food authorities will also be required ensure that no person offers, or expose for sale, HFSS foods to school children within 50m of school premises.

Food businesses manufacturing HFSS food products will also be barred from advertising such foods to children in school premises.