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E-commerce companies in FSSAI tangle for flouting direct selling norms

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E-paper

Leading e-commerce companies in the country are caught in an FSSAI tangle with the apex food regulator directing them to comply with the rules prescribed for direct selling food products. In this regard, FSSAI recently shot a letter to e-commerce sites such as Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and Shopclues for violating the norms for sale of the food items produced by the direct selling entities.

In the letter, Garima Singh, director, regulatory and compliance division, FSSAI, said that the Indian Direct Selling Association had brought to FSSAI's notice that health supplements and food items produced by direct selling entities were being sold on e-commerce platforms without the producers' prior consent. The e-commerce sites were charged of violating the guidelines prescribed by the department of consumer affairs in 2016 wherein a person needed to have prior approval from direct selling entities in order to sell such products.



The letter stated, "There has been a model guideline issued by the department of consumer affairs in 2016 wherein clause 7/6 (Conduct for the protection of consumer) of the said guidelines specifically stipulates that 'any person who sells or offers for sale, including on an e-commerce platform/market place, any product or service of direct selling entity must

have prior written consent from the respective direct selling entity in order to undertake or solicit such sale or offer."

While directing the e-commerce sites to have prior written consent, Singh insisted, "In the interest of maintaining the food safety chain, e-commerce portals may ensure that the products of DSEs sold or offered through their e-portals have prior written consent of concerned DSEs as per the guidelines of DCA."

A point worthy of noting is that recently the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) issued a circular to Food Safety Commissioners of all states and Union Territories, informing them about the simplification of the FBO (Food Business Operator) registration process, for the direct selling industry. Meanwhile, leading e-commerce companies in the country did not respond to the query as to how they plan to comply with the norms.