

Food industry to commit to lower salt, sugar today

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E-Paper

Leading packaged food companies, retailers and restaurant firms are set to make voluntary commitments on Tuesday to reduce salt and sugar in their products, offer healthier food options at their outlets and prominently display them on their retail shelves. These commitments will be made in support of a multi-sectoral initiative called the Eat Right Movement, led by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



'Multi-sectoral effort'

FSSAI, in collaboration with the Health Ministry, is also set to launch the first-of-its-kind TV campaign starring actor Rajkumar Rao to encourage consumers to make small behavioural changes and choose safe and healthier food options. The campaign's tagline is Eat Right Movement-Aaj Se Thoda Kam.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI told *BusinessLine*, "We expect about 30-40 companies from various sectors to voluntarily commit to the action plan of the Eat Right Movement. This is a multi-sectoral effort aimed to bring a transformation across the entire food chain." Packaged food companies such as Nestle, Patanjali, Kellogg's and Heinz, among others, will be making voluntary commitments to reformulate their products to reduce unhealthy ingredients and invest in healthier foods. This will include edible oil companies and industry bodies that will make commitments towards making India trans-fat free by 2022.

New regulations

Meanwhile, restaurant and hotel industry bodies will be making commitments towards serving safe food, ensuring the availability of healthier food options, besides labelling their menus to guide consumers make mindful choices. Some retail and ecommerce companies have also decided to come on-board with commitments to allocate more shelf space to healthier food products on their retail shelves and online platforms. "The Eat Right Movement is the natural organic evolution of our various Safe and Nutritious Food initiatives. We are also in consultation to introduce new regulations for labelling, advertising and claims for packaged food industry aimed at guiding consumers to be mindful about their food choices. All these efforts together under one umbrella will help focus on bringing a transformation in the entire ecosystem," Agarwal added.

On its part, FSSAI is already in discussions to finalise new regulations on labelling, and has proposed red colour-coded labelling for products with higher amount of fat, sugar and salt. Another draft regulation on advertising and claims proposes to restrict the marketing of junk food to children. It is also looking at ways to introduce norms for restaurants to introduce labelling on their menus besides setting food standards for schools.

"We believe this initiative will help us learn about practical challenges We need to bring in interventions not only in the supply side but also the demand side. Hence we are also focussing on sensitising consumers about safe and healthy food options through the movement," he added.