

Alcoholic beverage makers to seek approvals for new labelling norms: FSSAI

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NEW DELHI: Alcoholic beverage makers will seek approvals from excise commissioners to adopt new labelling norms, including statutory warnings on liquor bottles, food regulator FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal said Thursday.

He hoped that the new set of labelling norms would be fully in place in six months.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had last year issued a regulation on alcoholic beverages and the same became effective from April 1.

As per this regulation, all liquor bottles need to carry a statutory warning that "consumption of alcohol is injurious to health. Be safe-dont drink and drive".

The FSSAI has given six months to the manufacturer for use of unused labels and printed cans. Moreover, alcoholics beverages manufactured prior to April 1, 2019, can be sold in the market up to March 31, 2020.

"I think for alcoholic beverages sector, the implementation of these standards is a significant way forward in order to improve the quality and standards of alcoholic beverages available in the country," Agarwal told reporters on the sidelines of a conference.

"So far, it was primarily regulated by excise commissioners and they were only looking at alcoholic content and the toxic substances in alcohol. Now, there are far more elaborate standards that are benchmarked with the global standards and in certain cases, they have taken the Indian context also in consideration," he added.

In addition to excise commissioners, the food safety commissioners would also look into the enforcement of these standards, Agarwal said.

On the labelling norms, the FSSAI's CEO said the new labels including statutory warning would be fully effective from October 1.

Alcohol makers would take approvals of excise commissioners for changes of labels, he said.

"We are not changing norms for languages as it is a sensitive issue as in many states they do it in English and in other states, they do it in English as well as local languages," Agarwal said.

The FSSAI's chief was speaking to reporters after launching EAT-Lancet Commission report 'Food Planet Health' in India. This report was released globally in January.

The report, for the first time ever, proposes scientific targets for what constitutes a healthy diet derived from a sustainable food system, the FSSAI said.

Based on the findings of this report, Agarwal said the government would bring a region-specific dietary guidelines to help people in leading a healthy life.