

## **FHRAI hails FSSAI rules making registration mandatory for home-cooked food sellers**

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The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has welcomed Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s enforcement rules making registration mandatory for home-cooked food sellers.

The apex hospitality association has stated that food operators, whether operating from home or from dark kitchens, should be regulated for cleanliness and hygiene. If a law is applicable for hotels and restaurants, then it should be applicable to any such businesses that serve food. It has also pointed out that unregistered, unregulated Food Business Operators (FBOs) may not be maintaining hygiene standards, which is detrimental to the interest of consumers and poses health risks. The FHRAI has thanked the FSSAI for taking action on the pleas made by it and for clamping down on such fly by night food operators.

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, vice president, FHRAI, said, "FSSAI has responded to our plea and is taking to task any such unregulated and illegal dark kitchens. Quite a few of these are actually funded and run by the Food Service Aggregators (FSAs) to escape responsibilities attached to operating restaurants legally and of course, also taxes. This causes a huge loss to the state and the exchequer. Not to mention the questionable hygiene standards, because there is no one to monitor and they are not registered under FSSAI."

In the past, in its representations to the DPIIT, the FHRAI had voiced concerns regarding FSAs listing such illegal establishments on their portals or food delivery applications. It had suggested to the Ministry that FSAs were complicit in encouraging and giving recognition to many unregistered dark kitchen operators.

"We are thankful to the FSSAI for understanding the issue and taking stringent action. We have been bringing it to the notice of authorities since quite some time now and we are glad that we have been heard. We had even written to the DPIIT expressing concerns about the unregulated sector driven by FSAs. The FSAs are actually promoting illegal business under the guise of discounts and unreasonably low prices on food. If the FSAs stop listing such illegal businesses on their apps, these businesses will automatically follow legal compliances and apply for licences considering most of their sales are almost entirely dependent on these delivery apps," added Kohli.

The FHRAI has asked for the FSAs to be held accountable and if need be, taken to task if they continue listing illegal and unregulated players.

Pradeep Shetty, joint honorary secretary, FHRAI, and vice president, HRAWI, said, “The FSAs initially had entered the market as food delivery service providers, but today claim to be part of the hospitality industry. They are not. Now they have started their own funded establishments under several names, many of which are just dark kitchens operating with no licences or permissions. All they need to do is to make the food look presentable to the customer on the app and the kitchen’s hygiene and cleanliness is never a concern. Then promote it vociferously online with deep discounting and predatory business practices and kill the legally compliant restaurants and hotels.”

The FHRAI has also emphasised on the need for creating a level playing field for all players in the hospitality enterprise. It has said that several dark kitchens are operating without any conformation to standard hospitality or kitchen hygiene practices. With no such regulations or checks applicable to their business, they may be putting the health and lives of consumers at risk.

“Restaurants and hotels are subjected to rigours of state and Central laws for operating food businesses, but these illegal dark kitchens operate without any licence. They have no need or requirement for adhering to any norms especially, hygiene and cleanliness related which all registered restaurants and hotels follow. This is unfair, unjust and most importantly it disadvantages ethical businesses despite doing the right thing,” concluded Shetty.