



Under FoSCoS, FBOs need to file annual return online only

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The FSSAI has ordered that the mandatory filing of annual returns by the food businesses shall be done 'online' only by next fiscal, as the food licensing and registration system of the apex food regulator has now migrated to the Food Safety Compliance System (FoSCoS).

FoSCoS is entirely a 'cloud' based online system that would be a one-stop 'Compliance Portal' for Food Safety and will incorporate modules for functional needs such as advanced MIS, integration with InFolNet and FICS; Hygiene Rating and Audits etc. along with annual return filing.

The order by the FSSAI reads, "It is decided that online submission of Annual Return on Food Safety Compliance System –FoSCoS, shall be made mandatory for the food businesses involved in manufacturing and importing of food products with effect from FY 2020-21."

The order added that the window for annual return filing for FY 2020-21 will open from 1st April 2021 onwards.

FSSAI has also directed the licensing authorities to refrain from insisting on physical submission of return and ensure that FBOs are well informed about the same.

According to an official with the FSSAI, the online submission of the annual return by next fiscal will ensure the ease of doing business and help in making an online database at the national level along with targeted enforcement. Further, the FBOs involved in manufacturing of milk and milk products were also allowed to submit annual returns while the half yearly return shall be discontinued by next fiscal.

Under rule of the FSS –Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses Regulations, 2011, every manufacturer and importer who has been issued a license shall on or before 31st May of each year submit a return electronically or in physical form as may be prescribed by the concerned food safety commissioner to the licensing authority in respect of each class of food products handled during the previous fiscal.

And for FBOs engaged in manufacturing of milk or milk products, provisions were made for half yearly returns for the period of 1st April to 30th September and 1st October to 31st March of each financial year while such returns were needed to be filed within a month from the end of the period.

Under the previous FLRS system the annual returns were allowed to be submitted manually. However, due to covid protocols, the FBOs were asked by the FSSAI to submit the annual return by emails for the current fiscal year and the last date for submission of the return was extended till 31st December 2020.

The FBOs were also asked to maintain the record of submission of return as loss of submission proof renders FBOs liable for hefty punishment.