

# India's food safety authority to set rules for gluten-free claims

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**The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is developing directives on the labeling of gluten-free products to correct the lack of information of the wheat allergy in the country.**

According to Pawan Aggarwal, CEO of FSSAI, currently many producers incorrectly label their products as 'low gluten' in order to increase their sales.

*"A food product meant for wheat allergy patients has to be gluten-free. It can't have low gluten and that's why we have proposed to ban such labeling,"* he said.

He added the FSSAI plans to conduct surprise inspections to verify whether producers are selling totally gluten-free products, when using the claim.

*"We have to ensure there is no cross contamination,"* said Aggarwal.

## Impending epidemic

Once considered a Western disease, wheat intolerance has now become an 'impending epidemic in India' by health experts.

A study published in International Archives of Allergy and Immunology found 22% of patients tested for food allergies in Kolkata, India, showed a positive response to wheat allergens.

According to Celiac India, the disease is virtually non-existent in southern Indian but prevalent in the North Indian population where wheat is primarily grown and eaten as a staple.

In 2010, a study revealed **the prevalence of celiac disease in the north Indian community** was one in 96 persons, but there is an **increasing incidence of the disease in India.**

*"Celiac disease is more common than is recognized in India,"* wrote the authors.