

FSSAI to notify packaging norms soon

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The new packaging regulations will set specific migration limits for contaminants that are found in certain packaging materials - VasukiRao

Will define standards for use of materials such as glass, metal, paper and cardboard

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In a bid to further strengthen regulatory framework on food contamination on account of sub-standard packaging materials, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has finalised its new packaging regulation, which is expected to be notified in the next few days, according to sources.

Apart from plastics, the regulation will aim to comprehensively define standards for use of various other packaging materials such as glass, metal and metal alloys and paper and cardboard, among others.

Earlier, packaging and labelling norms had been clubbed together under one regulation. Now, FSSAI will notify a separate regulation which will solely focus on setting norms for materials used for packaging, preparation, storage, wrapping, transportation and sale or service of food products.

The sources said the food safety regulator intends to incorporate packaging standards set by BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) in its own packaging regulations so that they become mandatory and legally-binding on the packaged food industry.

Migration limits

The new packaging regulations will also set specific migration limits for contaminants such as barium, zinc, cobalt, iron, lithium among others which are found in certain packaging materials such as plastic. Migration limits determine the maximum permitted amount of a contaminant substance leached from a material that may come in contact with food products.

Last year, FSSAI had conducted a joint study with the Indian Institute of Packaging to look into the impact of chemical contamination from packaging materials such as plastics, paper and metal and metal alloys. The findings of the study have been used to determine these migration limits, sources added.

The food safety regulator will also give its own recommendations for the kind of packaging that should ideally be used for storage and sale of various food commodities in the new regulations. For instance, in the case of packaging of sweetening agents such as honey, use of glass bottle with metal caps, PET containers, plastic laminated tubes and plastic-based thermoformed containers among others, are part of the draft recommendations.

The regulations are also likely to look at provisions to check on the use of newspaper and recycled material for wrapping and transporting food products.