

With new packaging norms, bar for safety is raised, observes IIP's Alam

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The bar for safety norms is raised, felt an expert while speaking at the recently-held National Conference on Innovative Packaging Techniques for Food Products & its Safety Aspects at the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), Delhi Centre, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.

Dr Tanweer Alam, joint director & regional head, IIP, pointed out that with the promulgation of new regulations by FSSAI for packaging material based on the sampling & studies conducted by IIP, the bar for safety norms is raised with focus of the experts now shifting on the migration of the individual polymer material of which the packaging material particularly plastic ones are made.

The conference programme included three sessions focussed on 'Emerging Challenges of Safety in Food Packaging,' 'Innovations in Food Packaging,' and 'Emerging Trends in Food Safety & Packaging Regulation.'

The experts, during the interactive sessions, outlined the industry's efforts to bring forth the importance of keeping pace with evolving global & local regulatory compliance and constant need to have an innovative approach towards food packaging along with the consumer safety outlook.

The new regulation by FSSAI on packaging standards was also discussed in the conference that mandates that all packaging materials must be safe and should not transfer components or chemicals to food so as to endanger human health, change food composition or adversely affect food taste or odour.

Dr Alam said, "Packaging is vital for food safety, particularly the primary packaging in direct contact of the food. Packaging enhances the shelf life of the packaged food and is also a tool for branding and promotion. However there are chances for migration of the contaminants. Ideally the packaging should be non-toxic, it should be inert in nature but at the same time for example we are using ink on the packaging material which is migratory in nature. So we need to evaluate the migration of the ink. Besides there are additives used in making of packaging material that also needs evaluation."

“Moreover, FSS packaging regulations, to be implemented from July 2019, is a good step towards making packaging safe for the food products. And these standards are at par with the international standards,” stated Dr Alam.

“Further, we also need to check on the individual chemical migration, particularly of the polymer material. What the pan India study conducted by IIP told us is that the organised sector is following the norms and operating at par with the international standards. However the unorganised sector is a matter of worry and there is need to incorporate it through awareness and capacity building,” he added.

Meanwhile, the chief guest for the day was Dr Anup Wadhawan, Commerce Secretary, Government of India, and the guest of honour was Ashok Goel, CMD, Essel Propack. Prof. (Dr) N C Saha, director, IIP, welcomed the guests and the delegates with an inaugural speech. The conference witnessed presence of many prominent names as speakers & participants from the industry such as Coca-Cola India Pvt. Ltd, Nestle (India) Ltd, Paharpur 3P, HTW Ltd, W&H India Pvt. Ltd, Century Pulp & Paper, Mitsui Chemicals India Pvt. Ltd, DuPont Nutrition & Bioscience, and Siegwark India Pvt. Ltd. The chief guest also released a coffee table book on IIP during the programme.