

FDA proposes prohibition on OFSAs and FBOs sans hygiene rating

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CHANDIGARH: Exercising the powers under section 30(2)(a) of Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006, Commissioner, Food & Drug Administration Punjab, Mr. KS. Pannu has issued a show cause notice to the Online Food Supply Aggregators (OFSAs) as well as the Food Business Operators (FBOs) in Punjab as to why not prohibit the distribution/supply/sale of food through OFSAs related to those FBOs who have not got their hygiene rating done.

It has also been proposed to prohibit Online Food Supply Aggregators from sourcing the food from FBOs sans proper hygiene rating, informed the Commissioner and added that the objections to the said proposal, if any, have been invited to the FDA office by January 30, 2020.

Pannu said that information technology driven Online Food Supply Aggregators such as M/s Uber Eats, M/s Swiggy, M/s Zomato, M/s Food Panda etc have been distributing/selling/supplying food to the consumers after sourcing the same from Food Business Operators. This is a very recent phenomenon in which the direct and primary contact between the consumer of food articles and the manufacturers of food articles, especially the hot cooked food articles has snapped, opined Pannu. This mechanism of distribution/sale/supply of food by OFSA has obliterated the system of responsibility of maintaining the quality of food, which till now was being directly verified by the consumers from the food business operators at his counter.

Commissioner, Food & Drug Administration said that with the introduction of mechanism of OFSAs, it has become important to ensure that these aggregators supply only the good quality and properly hygienic food articles to the consumers. He said that Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued instructions vide which the system of hygiene rating of the food business operators has been introduced and the FSSAI has empanelled various agencies to conduct the hygiene rating of the FBOs. He said that FDA, Punjab had advised all the OFSA in May 2019 to ensure that the FBOs from where they were sourcing the food for distribution to consumers should be asked to get the hygiene rating of their business done and the OFSA should source and supply the food from only those FBOs who secure at least three smiles out of a range of five smiles in the matter of hygiene rating.

He informed that in September 2019 the date of getting the hygiene rating of the FBOs was extended till 31st of October, 2019. But, in December 2019, the representatives of OFSAs

namely M/s Uber Eats informed that 132 FBOs out of 521 FBOs enlisted with them have got the hygiene rating done. Similarly, M/s Zomato intimated that only 72 FBOs registered with them out of total 6108 have got the hygiene rating done.

He said that the progress of ensuring hygiene rating by these agencies was found to be woefully inadequate. Since, the issue involved is related to public health, therefore, in the public interest it has been proposed to prohibit those FBOs who have not got the hygiene rating of their premises done from supplying their food to the OFSA. It is also proposed to prohibit the OFSA to source and purchase the food for supply to public from those FBOs which are not hygienically rated and where such rating is less than 3 marks/smilies out of 5, informed Pannu.