

Registration details of 30-40% of restaurants not on apps, finds FSSAI

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In its recent review of e-commerce food platforms, FSSAI, the country's apex food regulator, has found that the aggregators did not have the details of FSSAI licenses and/or registrations in respect of as many as 30- 40% per cent of the restaurants listed on their sites. In fact, some of the e-commerce platforms themselves had not obtained licenses. As the per conditions of the license, only those restaurants that possess FSSAI licenses or registrations can be listed on e-commerce platforms.

Late last month, FSSAI had directed leading e-commerce food service providers like Swiggy, Zomato, Foodpanda, UberEats and others to delist non-FSSAI licensed food businesses from their platform by July 31, 2018 after receiving consumer complaints of sub-standard food being served through e-commerce platforms. The aggregators were advised to display the FSSAI license number on their platform along with the name and location of the restaurants.

At the review meeting held today, the regulator found that some of the leading food aggregators were operating without FSSAI licenses or registrations. Further, it was noted by the regulator that over 30-40 per cent of listed food businesses by these e-commerce aggregators are unlicensed or unregistered.

In many cases, listed food businesses have recently applied for FSSAI licenses or registrations, but still do not possess them.

The regulator gave the food regulators a two-week deadline to submit an action plan to delist unlicensed or unregistered food businesses. These aggregators were also advised to promote food safety and hygiene amongst their listed food businesses by training food safety supervisors, compliance with good hygiene practices (GHPs), ensuring display of food safety boards on their premises.

It has also been decided that the audits of the information technology (IT) platforms of these e-commerce food aggregators would be conducted from the point of view of compliance with food safety and hygiene under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the Food Safety (Licensing and Registration) Regulations, 2011.

In his statement on the subject, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI, stated, "This is a part of the special drive by the regulator to bring in all food businesses under the FSSAI licensing regime and ensure compliance with the food safety laws."

He added, "FSSAI had only recently notified the regulation bringing e-commerce aggregator platforms within the purview of the food safety law."

Agarwal hoped these platform will now begin to take food safety seriously from a regulatory standpoint. He appealed to these aggregators to begin to use some of their resources in training and capacity building of restaurants for improving food safety and hygiene, rather than focusing only on deep discounts and aggressive marketing to build consumer traction to their respective platforms. He hoped that the investors of the platforms will take note of this.