

Std Op Procedure for offline FSSAI licences in pandemic like situation

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a direction setting up Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for offline licences and registration in case of exceptional situation.

According to FSSAI, this was done to avoid any inconvenience caused due to an unprecedented situation like the currently prevailing countrywide lockdown on account of Covid-19 pandemic.

FSSAI states that of late there have been instances of Internet shutdown due to which there has been complete non-accessibility of FSSAI's online food licensing and registration system (FLRS) by the users.

“Keeping in view the past instances, a Standard Operating Procedure has been prepared for the situations like complete lockdown of Internet services, natural calamities or unforeseen technical glitch encountered in the online licensing system,” observes the directive while adding that this SOP will serve as guidance to concerned authorities for issuance of offline licences/registration or allowing food businesses to continue their operations, in the case of their licences or registration have expiry date during the period of non-availability of online licensing system in the region.

The SOP has three steps

1. Initiation of offline licences or registration certificates, which include initiation of procedure for issuance of offline licences/registrations certificates by either FSSAI issuing an order to the effect or Commissioner, Food Safety, of the concerned state/UT with prior approval from CEO, FSSAI, or in emergency situation, under intimation to CEO, FSSAI – citing the reasons thereof. Commissioner, Food Safety, of the concerned state/UT shall periodically review the order and terminate it as soon as possible.

2. Case by case process of the Application. Case 1: Already Submitted Applications with payments in online licensing system (FLRS), Case 2: Application for fresh Licence/Registration, Case 3: Renewal of Licences/Registrations and Case 4: Modification, Surrender or Transfer of Licence, Endorsement of Organic/Fortified Food Products.

3. Capturing of data of licences/registrations for further record. Here the State Food Safety Commissioner needs to intimate FSSAI about the restoration of Internet services in the region. Further, Commissioner, Food Safety, shall, by an order, direct all the licensing/registration authorities to feed the data of offline issued licence/registrations and other related data in online licensing system i.e., FLRS within 15 days of restoration of Internet services in the region or at a reasonable frequency if limited Internet is available.

FSSAI has directed Food Safety Commissioners to strictly follow the SOP in such an exceptional situation.