

FSSAI urges food safety depts to conduct searches for counterfeit food

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has asked the state food safety departments to conduct regular market searches for food products that are likely to be counterfeit. The apex food regulator has also asked the food safety commissioners to also involve local police, if needed. FSSAI has, in this regard, written a letter to food safety commissioners of all states, and also held a meeting with industry representatives to deliberate upon the subject.

The letter read, "Conduct regular market surveillance for food products selling significantly below the MRP (maximum retail price) and likely to be counterfeit."

"Such action may be taken in coordination with local police or other authorities related to counterfeiting. Sensitisation of police and other agencies is important to ensure effective investigation and identification of the source point and their closure," it added. FSSAI also urged the state authorities to boost the local intelligence to identify the commodities, hot spots and trends in counterfeit food products. It added that coordination with the major brands was also desirable to generate actionable information. It has been in receipt of complaints about many imported or foreign food products sold in the market that are clandestinely imported without the regulator's approval.

"These may or may not be counterfeit. However, they do not have FSSAI approval and hence not allowed," said an official with the FSSAI. The regulator stated, "While the import mechanism is being strengthened to reduce such occurrences, the easy availability of such goods on e commerce platforms, reputed malls and food retail outlets conveys an impression of sanctity to consumers, and therefore, the state food safety commissioners were asked to conduct regular surveys to identify selling of such imported foreign goods which do not have an FSSAI licence." The FSSAI has also urged the state food safety departments to increase the strength in terms of manpower, if needed, and the state authorities need to be vigilant as the counterfeit food items are likely to be sub-standard's and sometimes even unsafe.