

FSSAI issues food packing rules

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has prohibited the use of packaging material made of recycled plastics including carry-bags for packaging, storing, carrying or dispensing food articles. The authority has set a deadline of July 1, 2019, for food businesses to comply with the new regulations that now replace all provisions with respect to packaging requirements prescribed in the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.

The regulations specify the suggestive list of packaging materials for different food product categories. As per these regulations, the packaging materials used for packing or storing the food products shall conform to the Indian Standards provided in the schedules. The new regulations are based on two studies conducted by the authority through the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), Mumbai and the National Test House (NTH), Kolkata. The studies showed that the packaging material used by the organised sector is largely safe but there are concerns about the use of packaging material by the unorganised/informal sector. Further, there are serious concerns about the safety of loose packaging material.

Taking cognisance of the carcinogenic effect of inks and dyes, these regulations also prohibit the use of newspaper and such other materials for packing or wrapping of food articles and includes respective Indian standard for printing inks for use on food packages. FSSAI said in a statement that the primary objective of packaging is to protect the food contents from microbiological, chemical, physical and atmospheric contamination and preserve the food and thereby protect consumer's health. Good packaging also ensures that there is no change in sensory properties or composition of food when packed.

Packaging is essential and critical for promoting food safety, extended shelf-life and thereby enhancing food security, it said. With new food quality standards already in place, FSSAI will be focusing on enforcing the regulations without impacting businesses. During 2018, FSSAI accelerated the process of setting standards and notified 27 new regulations for food standards.

The rules also prescribe specific migration limits of contaminants for plastic packaging materials They also include respective Indian standard for printing inks for use on food packages.