

Ref. No: DHA/2024/HP/398

29th April 2024

To,
Shri G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS
Chief Executive Officer
Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
3rd & 4th Floor, FDA Bhawan, Kotla Road near Bal Bhawan
New Delhi - 110002 India

Subject: Restaurants Misleading Consumers with Pre-Packaged Food and Drinks and Lack of Information on Nutritional Value

Dear Mr. Rao,
Namaste

We are writing to bring urgent attention to practices observed in restaurants across India that need urgent attention from FSSAI.

Pre-packaged Food and Drinks

It appears to be increasingly common for restaurants to serve pre-packaged food and drinks, including fruit juices, to consumers without disclosing the information that they are serving pre-packaged food & juices. This practice is misleading and potentially detrimental to consumer health.

Consumers generally expect freshly prepared meals and fruit juices when dining at a restaurant. Withholding this information undermines their right to make informed choices about the food and fruit juices they consume. This deception can have serious consequences, potentially exposing them to unknown ingredients, preservatives, or lower-quality substitutes.

Furthermore, such practices exploit consumer trust and erode the reputation of the restaurant industry and the regulators. Consumers who blindly trust the advertised freshness of food and drinks are essentially being misled into paying a premium for something they are not receiving. This ultimately jeopardizes their well-being.

Full Disclosure on Type of Oil Used in Preparing the Food

Following the model of pre-packaged food labeling, restaurants, and hotels should be mandated to clearly display the type of oil used for cooking on their menus. Disclosure of the nature of oil used in freshly

Address: C-6, Dhawandeep Building, 6, Jantar Mantar Road, New Delhi-110001, India Ph. No: +91-9911100774

prepared food will help consumers avoid certain kinds of oil and ask for healthier options.

Calorie and Nutritional Value of the Food Served/Ordered

Given India's alarming status as the global epicenter of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity, we advocate for the inclusion of calorie and nutritional information on restaurant menus. Uninformed dietary choices are a significant contributor to these health challenges. By displaying the nutritional content of each dish/food item, restaurants can empower consumers to make healthier selections. To simplify compliance, FSSAI can provide pre-determined calorie values for certain foods for smaller restaurants. This simple yet impactful step can guide individuals away from calorie-dense and less nutritious options, thereby promoting healthier eating habits and reducing the incidence of NCDs.

Here are a few of the policy recommendations that we submit to FSSAI:

1. **Mandatory Disclosure:** Restaurants should be obligated to clearly state on their menus whether a dish or juice is freshly prepared or pre-packaged and served. They should also mandatorily disclose the type of oil used and the calorie & nutritional value of the dish/food items. Online food delivery platforms, like Zomato and Swiggy, should also implement similar measures.
2. **Right to Ask:** Consumers should have the right to inquire about the preparation method of any dish or juice they order. Restaurants must provide truthful and transparent information.
3. **Compensation for Deception:** In cases where restaurants fail to disclose the above information, consumers should be entitled to seek compensation or a full refund from the restaurant/food aggregator.

Implementing these regulations will ensure transparency and empower consumers to make informed decisions about their dining experiences. It will also hold restaurants accountable for their practices and protect the health and well-being of consumers. As for now, FSSAI has just been reactive, which has become detrimental to the health of individuals. We urge FSSAI to take swift and decisive action on this matter proactively.

In the spirit of our mission to transform healthcare, we also request an update on the action taken regarding the advisory issued by FSSAI in 2016 to all states and Union territories, asking commissioners of food safety to restrict the use of newspapers for packing, serving, and storing food items.

We anticipate FSSAI's acknowledgment and action on these issues; however, if no action is taken, we may need to pursue implementation through the PIL.

Health Parliament is the world's foremost healthcare think-tank, and our work has created an impact globally. We have been invited by various multi-lateral bodies like the United Nations' Internet Governance Forum, the World Health Organization, The Commonwealth, etc. We believe in ground-level transformation through Real Work, Great

www.parliament.health



contact@parliament.health

Leaders, and Right Policies. We have produced seminal reports on topics covering all aspects of healthcare. Our work reaches the policymakers and has helped shape impactful public health interventions.

Kind regards

Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, PhD
Founder, Health Parliament &
Former Advisor to the Union Health Minister, Government of India
Email: contact@parliament.health
Website: www.parliament.health

✓ Cc: Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India

Address: C-6, Dhawandeep Building, 6, Jantar Mantar Road, New Delhi-110001, India Ph. No: +91-9911100774

