

Food safety authority notifies norms for audit via third-party agencies

MEENAKSHI VERMA AMBWANI

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In a bid to create a pool of auditing agencies, FSSAI had already given provisional recognition to 22 audit agencies - THE HINDU

Food businesses can voluntarily have their units certified by FSSAI-recognised professionals

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In a bid to strengthen the safety surveillance system in the country, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified auditing regulations. This has been done to enable checks on compliance levels among packaged food companies and food businesses through FSSAI-recognised third-party auditing agencies.

Under these regulations, third-party safety audits will be made mandatory for certain food categories based on risk classification.

“While emphasising on self-compliance by the food businesses, to address the need to monitor such compliance, FSSAI is envisaging introducing audit of food companies by FSSAI-recognised auditing agencies,” the food safety authority said.

The Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing) Regulations 2018 outline procedure for recognition of auditing agencies, terms and conditions for recognition, duties of auditors, audit reporting and audit monitoring systems among others.

Risk classification

“The food authority shall specify the category or type of food businesses, which shall be subject to mandatory safety auditing, on the basis of their risk classification,” the regulations stated. The risk classification will be done based on various parameters such as food type, intended customer use, nature of the activity of the business, volumes of the business, and the method of processing.

Independently, packaged food companies, food businesses and institutions can also voluntarily opt for third-party food audits of their facilities.

Officials said third-party audits will not only help strengthen the compliance culture among food companies and businesses but will also help reduce the burden of regulatory surveillance for Central and State licensing authorities.

“A food business having satisfactory food safety audits report may be subject to less frequent inspections by the Central licensing or the State licensing authorities,” the regulations stated.

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