



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

Dated: 06-04-2016

Page No: 04

### Register with us, food regulator tells e-tailers

Pleas of e-commerce companies that they are mere technology facilitators is not something that government bodies seem willing to buy. Just like state governments that want them to take responsibility for VAT payments, India's food regulator now wants [e-commerce](#) companies to come under its purview.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the body that brought Nestle India to its knees on the Maggi issue, has asked all major e-commerce companies, including Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal, to register under the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act 2006 if they want to continue their food business operations. This will allow its inspectors to do checks on the safety of the food items that the platform deals with or stores in its warehouses, and take action in the event of complaints.

According to documents reviewed by TOI, the regulator has also asked [e-commerce](#) firms to clearly display all details related to food items on their portals. This has to include names and addresses of sellers, their license numbers, nutrition and ingredient information, food safety details, and price parameters — so that the consumer is fully aware about what he or she is buying.

Online food tech startups and grocery delivery players such as Zomato, Swiggy, Foodpanda India, Grofers, Big Basket and Peppertap have also been asked to comply with the FSS Act 2006 and to facilitate businesses of only licensed and registered FBOs (food business operators) under the food regulator.

# FSSAI IN NEWS

"The online distribution channel has been neglected in regard to food safety. It has been noted that online shops are not necessarily subjected to inspection since sampling and analysis is often complicated as the provisions in FSS Act cannot be completely fulfilled in such business operations," FSSAI's note sent to e-commerce companies said. FSSAI held a meeting with senior executives of the online companies in Delhi on March 18 with regard to the new guidelines being planned. Industry body Ficci is now believed to be assisting the online players with their representation to the food regulator.

FSSAI plans to divide online companies into two segments where online marketplaces such as [Flipkart](#), [Amazon](#) and Snapdeal are being asked to get licensed under FSSAI, while the second category is being formed to address online food delivery companies which are being advised to facilitate business of FBOs who are FSSAI registered and licensed. FSSAI chairman Ashish Bahuguna told TOI that the aim of the move is to provide uniform safety to consumers on both online and offline channels. "They already fall under the FSS Act 2006, so ideally they should

follow the provisions immediately," he said. Emails, phone calls and text messages to all of the above-mentioned companies by TOI did not elicit any response.

FSSAI registered and licensed is a massive and complex process," a senior executive at one of these firms said on condition that his name not be disclosed. Over the past few months, online marketplaces have started selling various food categories on their platforms. Amazon started Amazon Now to sell daily use products. Snapdeal and Flipkart sell various packaged food products on their platforms.

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