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Potassium bromate in food items banned

The study found that 84 per cent of 38 commonly available brands of pre-packaged breads tested positive for potassium bromated



Following requests by the New Delhi-based research and advocacy organisation Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Monday banned use of potassium bromate - a common bread additive. The ban is unlikely to affect the Rs 30,000-crore bread industry as a majority of bakers stopped using the additive last month after a CSE report.

FSSAI, the apex food regulator of the country, on Monday came up with a notification saying "use of potassium bromate as an additive in any food is not allowed".

Ramesh Mago, president of All India Bread Manufacturers' Association, which represents country's top brands including Britannia, Harvest Gold and Modern, told Business Standard that following the allegations, manufacturers have stopped using potassium bromate since 27 May.

FSSAI IN NEWS

While lower cost of potassium bromate was a major reason behind its abundant use, production costs are unlikely to go up thanks to alternatives like ascorbic acid.

"FSSAI has banned potassium bromate. A notification has been issued in this regard. As far as potassium iodate is concerned, it has been referred to a scientific panel," FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal told PTI. Last month, the regulator had recommended the Health Ministry to remove potassium bromate from the list of permissible food additives after a study by the CSE.

The CSE came up with a study reporting presence of high levels of cancer-causing additives in white bread, bun and pizza bread, among others. The study had found that 84 per cent of 38 commonly available brands of pre-packaged breads, including pav and buns, tested positive for potassium bromate and potassium iodate.

According to CSE, potassium bromate typically increases dough strength, leading to higher rising and uniform finishing of baked products while potassium iodate is a flour treatment agent. The food additives are banned in many countries and are considered unfit for human consumption.
