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Food regulator to come out with norms to check misleading ads



Pawan Agarwal (left), CEO, FSSAI, with Benoy Roychowdhury, Chairman, ASCI, after signing an MoU in New Delhi on Tuesday. RAMESH SHARMA

FSSAI signs MoU with Advertising Standards Council of India

The Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) is working on regulations to check misleading and unsubstantiated health and nutritional claims made by food and beverage companies.

The food regulator on Tuesday also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to proactively look into the issues of misleading ads and claims in the food and beverage sector.

FSSAI IN NEWS

Addressing a media roundtable here on Tuesday, Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said draft regulations had already been prepared, which would well set down the procedures that companies would need to follow to be able to make substantiated health or nutritional claims.

“Food companies will need to submit documents to substantiate the claims, which will be studied by an expert panel. Companies that are launching new products and wish to make certain claims can get these pre-approved. We believe this will build a robust ecosystem regarding health and nutritional claims,” he said, adding that the regulations will be finalised in some time.

Under the MoU, FSSAI has given “suo motu” mandate to ASCI to process complaints against misleading ads by food companies. ASCI will actively monitor advertisements across various TV and print media.

In addition, it will also report to FSSAI those companies that do not comply with its directions, after it gets complaints through the GAMA Portal set up by the Consumer Affairs Ministry.

In addition, FSSAI will also redirect complaints against misleading food and beverage advertisements to ASCI, which will be reviewed using ASCI’s code and guidelines.

Agarwal said: “We have taken a serious view of misleading ads and expect food companies to be completely compliant. We will provide a paradigm shift toward handling such scenario and shall also bring transparency and accountability with stakeholder participation”.

Shweta Purandare, Secretary General, ASCI, said this will create more awareness among advertisers that they cannot go scot-free.

She said ASCI will actively monitor news channels, newspapers and magazines to screen potentially misleading ads.

The food regulator has also been taking up the matter of non-compliant advertisers. FSSAI has also received cases of misleading advertisement through the GAMA portal.

Out of the 21 cases received till date, it has disposed six cases, while the remaining are in different stages of scrutiny or disposal.
