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FSSAI partners with ASCI to keep a tab on misleading ads

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the advertisement industry's self-regulatory body Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to increase monitoring on misleading advertisements in the food and beverages (F&B) sector.

From now on, ASCI can take up cases and process complaints against misleading F&B advertisers. If advertisers fail to comply with ASCI's suggestions, the council can approach FSSAI, which will then take action under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

"FSSAI has taken a serious view of misleading advertisements related to food and to effectively handle the same have entered into an MoU with ASCI, which shall provide a paradigm shift towards handling such scenarios and shall also bring transparency and accountability with stakeholders' participation," Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer, FSSAI said.

Currently, FSSAI receives cases of misleading advertisements through the Grievances Against Misleading Ads (GAMA) portal, which was launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs in March 2015. So far, FSSAI has received 21 complaints of which six have been dealt with and the rest are in various stages of scrutiny.

With the partnership in place, FSSAI can now redirect complaints to ASCI, which will review and act in accordance with its guidelines.

According to Benoy Roychowdhury, chairman, ASCI, "the partnership with FSSAI will augment our efforts in curtailing misleading advertisements. F&B products are

consumed on a daily basis impacting the health and well-being of millions of consumers. Reining in misleading advertisements for this important sector would be a key priority for ASCI."