

Bread safe, but suspect additives to be banned: FSSAI



Food safety regulator's panel for ban on potassium bromate, potassium iodate

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) believes that the potassium bromate and potassium iodate levels found in random samples of domestic bread by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) are not 'carcinogenic'.

After facing flak on the Maggi controversy last year, the Authority finds itself on the backfoot on the food norms applicable for bread and bakery products.

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“Whatever I have read about the test, none of the samples tested was having potassium bromate levels higher than what has been prescribed in our existing regulation,” Pawan Agarwal, CEO of FSSAI, told *BusinessLine*. “While safety is important, efforts should not be made to create panic. I am surprised that CSE ... did not check our website, which has the recommendations of our scientific panel that has suggested removal of these additives, which we are going to notify soon.”

According to the FSSAI’s 2011 regulations, the maximum permissible level of potassium bromate and potassium iodate in bread is 50 ppm, while for flour and maida it is up to 20 ppm. The CSE report has found additive levels in the various samples to be from 1.18 ppm to 22.54 ppm.

“We should not create panic. We do want our citizens to be vigilant about food safety, but NGOs and consumer organisations need to be more responsible,” he added.

Besides, the evidence should be strong, he said, adding, “whether they are carcinogenic or not requires some evidence. There has to be sustained use of that particular chemical over a period of time before we make conclusions. You know having very objective evidence in science is very difficult. In any case, if there is a concern then it has to be discussed.”

Further, before reaching any conclusion on the use of additives or whether they should be removed from the list, “evidence available globally and its applicability in India has to be noted,” he said.
