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Bread makers to meet FSSAI over CSE report



A day after New-Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)'s report on the presence of high levels of cancer-causing additives in white bread, pav, bun and pizza bread, the country's apex body of bread manufacturers said it would seek a meeting with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to explain their position.

In a conversation with *Business Standard*, Ramesh Mago, president of the All

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India Bread Manufacturers' Association, which has representation of top bread makers such as Britannia, Harvest Gold and Modern, said: "The body will have an internal meeting in the next day or two to discuss this issue. We will meet the FSSAI shortly. The food safety regulations of 2011 permit up to 50 parts per million (ppm) of potassium bromate and/or potassium iodate in bread. In allied bakery products, it is 20 ppm for the two additives. In the event they are struck off the food additives list by FSSAI, we will cease to use them," he said.

The FSSAI has clarified that a notification to remove potassium bromate off the food additives list is in the works. "It wasn't notified so far though a scientific panel had discussed the relevance of potassium bromate and whether it is carcinogenic or not. Updating food standards is an ongoing process and we will issue a notification to strike it off the food additives list shortly," said Pawan Agarwal, chief executive officer of FSSAI.

Bread makers, however, have asked for time, saying they will need three to six months to change manufacturing and packaging if potassium bromate is struck off the list.

CSE had said on Monday that 84 per cent of the 38 commonly available brands of pre-packaged breads including pav and buns tested positive for potassium bromate and potassium iodate, banned in many countries as they are listed as 'hazardous' for public health.

According to CSE, one of the two is a category 2B carcinogen, the other triggers thyroid disorders. The bread samples that were tested include brands such as Britannia, Harvest Gold and fast-food chains such as KFC, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Subway, McDonald's and Slice of Italy. The study was limited to the Delhi region.

A statement by Jubilant FoodWorks, the master franchisee of Domino's and Dunkin Donuts in India, said. "The flour used by us is not treated with potassium bromate or potassium iodate. We undertake a certificate of analysis from all our suppliers on no usage of the above additives. We also carry out regular assessment of the flour to ensure compliance in this regard."

Vikram Ogale, director (national supply chain and quality assurance) at Westlife

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Development, the franchisee of McDonald's in the west and south of India, said: "We go through a lot of effort to ensure our food is safe for our customers and have stringent quality processes at every stage. In India, as also globally, McDonald's adheres to the highest food safety standards and pursues strict compliance with consumer safety laws and regulations."

Britannia stated: "We have studied the test reports released by the CSE. It clearly states that the third-party lab report did not find potassium bromate or iodate in Britannia bread samples. All our bread products are in 100 per cent compliance of existing food safety regulations." A KFC spokesperson added, "Our suppliers have confirmed that they do not use flour treated with potassium bromate or potassium iodate to manufacture our products. The safety and health of our customers is our top most priority."

However, despite the statements of assurance, the stocks of both Britannia and Jubilant FoodWorks, listed on the bourses, were down 1.06 per cent and 4.45 per cent, respectively, at the close of trade on the BSE on Tuesday. The share price of Westlife Development was trading up 1.11 per cent on the BSE.
