



FSSAI moves away from inspector raj, shuts 2 offices

Less than a year after forcing Nestle India to recall samples of Maggi and having a run-in with Patanjali Ayurved for manufacturing and selling atta noodles without requisite licenses, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has said it's moving towards a "deregulation" and "self-compliance" regime.

As a first step, the food regulator has ordered its subregional offices in Lucknow and Chandigarh to be wound up with effect from March 31.

From April 11, the FSSAI will carry out its regulatory work: licensing, enforcement and monitoring of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 remotely, from its New Delhi headquarters and four regional offices in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Guwahati. Orders for the closures were communicated to the Chandigarh and Lucknow offices on February 24 by FSSAI director, establishment, Rakesh Chandra Sharma.

FSSAI CEO Pawan Kumar Agarwal told TOI, "The decision to close down the two offices was carefully considered. They had limited staff and were not adding value. Our attempt is to downsize and rationalise our resources. We don't want food safety officials to be a nuisance to businesses. Rather we want citizens to have confidence in them."

Agarwal said FSSAI was keen to encourage self-regulation and declaration.

Citing a severe manpower crunch and the regulator's inability to, ever, fully control the food industry, Agarwal said enforcement will now shift into the hands of the

FSSAI IN NEWS

concerned state governments, while the regional office in New Delhi will monitor the overall regulation of food in Uttar Pradesh and other states in India.

According to RTI information sought by TOI from the FSSAI Lucknow office, companies issued notices included Nestle for its Maggi noodles, Mother Dairy for its 'Fruit Added Lassi', which RTI information shows was being sold across India without a product license, Hindustan Unilever for producing sub-standard bread under the label 'Modern', and Abu Dhabibased Lulu Group's Amroon Foods for illegal slaughter at its Barabanki facility.
