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## Govt ready with first official document laying down standards of alcoholic beverages

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The government is ready with its first official document laying down the standards of alcoholic beverages in the country.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has drawn up the Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages Standards) Regulations, 2016. It is the first time alcohol has been categorised and standardised as a consumable beyond the

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realms of excise tax. The authority has invited stakeholder comments on the draft standards by October 9, following which they will be notified.

The draft regulations define an alcoholic beverage as a “beverage or a liquor or brew containing more than 0.5% ethyl alcohol (ethanol) by volume/volume as the active agent. The ethyl alcohol used in the production of alcoholic beverages shall be of agricultural origin.” It can be either a distilled alcoholic beverage or an undistilled one.

Everything from a brewery to a distillery have been laid down in the 16-page document that also defines various kinds of alcohol such as brandy, cognac, whisky (bourbon, Irish whisky, single malt, blended malt, Scotch etc are defined in great detail) gin, vodka fenny, arrack, even laying down standards for various grades of country spirits.

Though the standards have been in the works for some years now, the timing is interesting, with politicians waking up to the political opportunities of prohibition. While Gujarat has been a dry state for years, Bihar has banned alcohol sale since April this year. Prohibition was an election issue in Tamil Nadu, while Kerala is going dry in a phased manner. And during his recent poll speeches in Punjab, Delhi CM [Arvind Kejriwal](#) has promised to crack down on alcohol.

FSSAI officials say like any other standards, once the regulations are notified any product sold under a particular label without abiding by these regulations can face action like [Maggi](#) did last year when its noodles showed high levels of monosodium glutamate and lead content. New products will also need approval based on these standards.

The regulations, without getting into the licence classifications for excise purposes where stores selling wine and beer are categorised differently, lay down standards for both varieties commonly not included under the “hard liquor” head. Apart from the generic definition of wine, other categories include table wine, red wine, white

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wine, rose wine, dry wine, sweet wine, fortified wine and dessert wine. Beer gets a similar treatment with categorisation into lager, pilsner, ale beer, draught beer, wheat beer etc.

Labelling requirements include declaration of alcohol content by volume with geographical designation or names allowed to be used only for products originating strictly from that geographical region. There is also mandatory allergen warning.

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