

## **4. Packaged Foods breach safe limits of Salt, Fat**

**Prelims Level:** Constitutional Bodies, Regulatory Bodies.

**Mains Level:** GS-III Food processing and related industries in India - scope and significance, location, Upstream and Downstream Requirements, Supply Chain Management.

### **Why in News?**

- Laboratory analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment from an array of packaged snacks and fast foods is found to breach safe limits of salt and fat content.

### **About the News:**

- The agency tested salt, fat, trans-fat and carbohydrates in 33 popular “junk foods”, which consisted of 14 samples of chips, salted snacks, instant noodles and instant soup, and 19 samples of burgers, fries, fried chicken, pizzas, sandwiches and wraps.
- The samples were collected from grocery stores and fast food outlets in the city.

### **How the test was done?**

- To calculate how unsafe the foods tested were, the organisation relied on the concept of the **Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)** — a daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrates and trans-fats.
- The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organisation, and the National Institute of Nutrition in India. It says that, ideally, no more than 5 gm of salt, 60 gm of fat, 300 gm carbohydrate and 2.2 gm of trans-fat should be consumed by an adult every day.
- Further, the RDA from each breakfast, lunch and dinner should be no more than 25%, and that from snacks no more than 10%.
- The CSE found that given the size of the servings and the amount of nutrients per 100 gm, a single packet of packaged nuts, soup or noodles ended up having these salts and fats well over the recommended limits.
- For instance, a popular savoury snack, with a serve size of 231 gm, had the equivalent of 7 gm of salt and 99 gm of total (saturated and unsaturated) fat.
- A single serving of the popular noodles Masala (70 gm) exhausted 50% of the composite RDA for a snack, and a serving of popular brand's nut cracker exhausted 35% of the salt RDA and 26% of the fat RDA.





### Need for Declaration:

- According to the proposed draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, packaged food companies will need to declare nutritional information such as calories (energy), saturated fat, trans-fat, added sugar and sodium per serve on the front of the pack. The food labels are also required to declare, per serve percentage contribution to RDA on the front of the pack.
- Though under discussions since 2015 and several drafts — the latest one came out in July — these rules have yet to become law, and to be operationalised.

### Need for Red Octagon:

- The CSE took the values prescribed in the drafts for their calculations and concluded that all of the popular snacks and fast foods ought to be displaying a '**Red Octagon**', a warning symbol employed in packaged foods in Chile and Peru.
- The Red Octagon, which should be printed on the front of the pack, has a number and the name of the food component within that indicates how widely off the RDA a particular ingredient is. Thus a Red "3.1, Salt" on a pack of Lay's India's Magic Masala by PepsiCo indicates that the salt it contains is 3.1 times the RDA for snacks.
- What we have seen is that all of the packaged foods of the various brands we tested would be in the red.
- The regulations, as they now stand, don't apply to fast foods such as burgers and pizzas, even though they were included in the CSE analysis.