

## **1. Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019**

**Prelims Level: Governance - Policies**

**Mains Level: GS-II Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the Population by the Centre and States and the Performance of These Schemes.**

### **Why in News?**

- Recently, a study conducted by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has shown that the total amount of salts, fat, trans-fat and carbohydrates in various fast foods such as pizzas, burgers, chips, instant noodles etc. is well above the recommended dietary allowance (RDA).
- This has proved to be critical since the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had earlier come out with the draft guidelines to put threshold limits on salt and fat in the packaged foods.
- However, due to the opposition by the companies, these regulations have not yet been Notified.

### **Current law in place regarding disclosure of Nutritional Components and its Flaws:**

- Currently, the labelling of the Pre-packaged Foods has been provided under the food safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011. It mandates the companies to disclose energy (kilo calories), protein, carbohydrates, total fat, trans-fat and saturated fat contained per 100g or per millilitre or per serve.
- However, these regulations have not proved to be effective in promoting public awareness about the health hazards of the pre-packaged foods.
- For instance, the companies are not required to display these nutrients information on the front of the pack. The companies are also not under any obligation to compulsorily declare the salt content in a product.
- Further, the companies are required just to distinguish veg and non-veg food products through Green and Brown Colour symbol enabling the consumers to make informed choices.
- However, the same has not been incorporated for the identification of food products with higher salt and fat contents.

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## **Highlights of the Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display)**

### **Regulations, 2019:**

- The proposed regulation suggests labelling the ingredients Front-of-Pack (FoP). The proposed FoP label has two parts: the first part declares the number of calories, saturated fat, trans fat, added sugar and sodium per serve; and the second part declares the per serve percentage standards prescribed by recommended dietary allowance (RDA).
- For nutrients like saturated fat, trans-fat, added sugar and sodium, thresholds are defined and if quantity of these exceeds the threshold the nutrient will be coded with colour red.
- It aims to make salt declaration mandatory on pre-packaged foods. Salt declaration will help people in taking informed choices, especially those who suffer from hypertension or are prone to it.
- Another positive change is the mandatory requirement of declaration of added sugar as part of nutrition labelling.
- Added sugar basically refers to sugar which gets added during processing to improve the taste and shelf life of the products. Under the existing regulations, sugar is to be declared without specifying how much of it is added and how much is naturally present. With the proposed declaration of added sugar, consumers will now be able to make informed choices.
- As per the existing law, a consumer is expected to be informed only about quantity of ingredients but not their corresponding standard prescribed as per RDA. The proposed regulation will make declaration of per serve contribution to recommended dietary allowance (RDA) mandatory. With this a consumer will be informed about the quantity of the ingredient he or she will consume through a particular product as percentage of daily requirement of that ingredient.

### **Certain Flaws in the Draft Regulations:**

- The Draft Regulations seeks to exempt certain categories of the pre-packaged foods from following Front-of-Pack (FoP) labelling. These exempted categories include packages less than 100 square centimetre, beverages providing less than 80 kilo calorie per serve and those sold in reusable bottles. Hence, in order to avoid the red coding on their packages, the food companies may start promoting smaller packages.
- The proposed draft does not mention labelling of genetically modified (GM) food. It was, however, a part of the earlier draft.

- GM labelling should be mentioned as it falls in the purview of packaged food. The proposed law allows companies three years to adjust to the new laws.

### **Why the draft regulations are opposed by the Food Processing Industries?**

- The Industry argues that norms are unscientific and that packaged food is made to cater to the “taste” of people. Further, the packaged industry argues that immense quantities of junk street food such as Samosa and Fried foods are consumed in the country with no check on their nutritional status and hence there is an inherent unfairness in regulating only the organised food processing sector. The Industry is also opposed to the “RED COLOUR” coding since it would dissuade the consumers from buying such products.

### **About Recommended Dietary allowance (RDA):**

- The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) refers to the daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrate and trans-fat. The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).
- As per the RDA, an adult should consume no more than 5g of salt, 60g of fat, 300g carbohydrate and 2.2 g of trans fat every day. Further, the RDA from breakfast, lunch and dinner should not be more than 25% and that from snacks should not be more than 10%. Thus, a snack should ideally have no more than 0.5g of salt and 6g of fat.
- The study carried out by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) revealed that the majority of packaged food and fast food items being sold in India contain "dangerously" high levels of fat and salt in them. The consumption of high levels of fat and salt causes obesity, hypertension, diabetes and heart-related ailments.