

INSIDE FSSAI'S CRACKDOWN ON MISLEADING LABELS AND FOOD SAFETY VIOLATIONS

What does the average Indian consume every morning? A bowl of *healthy* poha, a hot cup of chai, a packet of *100% atta* biscuits that promise better digestion, a carton of *100% natural* juice, perhaps an *energy drink* to get through the afternoon, and groceries delivered to the doorstep in under ten minutes. To most consumers, these are ordinary purchases made with extraordinary trust, trust that the words printed on a label accurately describe what lies inside the package.

Recent enforcement actions by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) suggest that this trust is not always justified. Over the past few months, the regulator has issued notices to several food businesses for misleading “100%” claims, unauthorised “organic” and “vegan” labels, unsupported health claims, expired food deliveries, and even hazardous adulteration practices. Viewed together, these cases reveal more than isolated instances of non-compliance, they expose a pattern of marketing practices that often-let perception takeover transparency and accountability.

This article examines the legal framework governing these violations and analyses how FSSAI's recent enforcement actions are reshaping food safety compliance in India.

The “100%” Hook: When Fine Print Tells a Different Story

This section analyses the enforcement trends surrounding Misbranded Foods and Misleading Advertisements under the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006. Misbranding occurs when food is offered with false, misleading, or deceptive claims on its packaging or in advertisements. In this context, regulators have firmly established that an accurate ingredient list on the back of a pack does not fix a deceptive headline claim on the front.

The following cases illustrate how food authorities are holding mainstream brands to strict standards of literal truth, rejecting industry loopholes and creative interpretations.

1. Storia Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd.

Storia Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd. marketed its product as “100% Tender Coconut Water” on the front of the package. However, the ingredient declaration revealed that the product was reconstituted from water and only 9.6% coconut water concentrate, rather than consisting entirely of tender coconut water. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) held that merely disclosing the term “*reconstituted*” in the ingredient list was insufficient to dispel the misleading impression created by the prominent front-of-pack claim.¹

The company's “**100% Natural**” representation was similarly found to be deceptive. Although marketed as a natural product, the ingredient list disclosed the presence of INS 202, a Class II preservative. The CCPA observed that the inclusion of a chemical preservative was fundamentally inconsistent with an unqualified claim of being “*100% Natural*.”

¹ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (@fssai_safefood), Instagram (June 14, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DZjYSZqIMzb/>.



Source: Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), *Order in the matter of Stori Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd.* (2026).

The regulator also scrutinised several of Stori's fruit juices, including its Mixed Fruit, Mango, Guava Chilli, and Pomegranate variants. While the packaging prominently depicted and promoted pure fruit content, the Pomegranate Juice contained only 4% pomegranate juice concentrate, creating a misleading impression about the product's actual composition. In addition, the company made therapeutic and health-related claims regarding its coconut water without producing adequate scientific substantiation.

Finding these representations to constitute misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices, the CCPA initiated suo motu proceedings, imposed a ₹1 lakh penalty, and directed the company to withdraw the impugned claims from its packaging, website, and other digital platforms.²

2. Mrs. Bectors Food Specialities Ltd. (The English Oven Brand)

Mrs. Bectors Food Specialities Ltd alleged absolute compositional claims on its bread products. However, during formal CCPA proceedings, the company itself admitted that the bread actually contained only 87% whole wheat flour by composition. The manufacturer argued that “100% Atta” was only intended to mean that wheat was the *sole grain source* used (i.e., that no maida or other cereals were added). The CCPA flatly rejected this argument, establishing that consumer perception is the decisive legal standard. An ordinary consumer reading “100% Atta Bread” naturally understands the product to be composed entirely or near-entirely of whole wheat flour.

The CCPA also challenged the cumulative impact of combining the claims “100% Whole Wheat” and “Zero Maida” on the same packaging. Regulators ruled that while “Zero Maida” might be technically true in isolation, its combination with “100% Whole Wheat” creates a misleading overall impression that the bread consists entirely of whole wheat flour and contains no other ingredients or additives.

The CCPA imposed a ₹1 Lakh penalty on Mrs. Bectors for misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices, ordering the immediate removal of these claims from all packaging and retail portals.³

² *In re Stori Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd.*, Case No. CCPA-2/71/2024-CCPA (Cent. Consumer Prot. Auth. June 18, 2026) (India).

³ *In re Mrs. Bectors Food Specialities Ltd.*, Case No. CCPA-2/72/2024-CCPA [E-35629] (Cent. Consumer Prot. Auth. June 18, 2026) (India).



Source: Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), Order In re Mrs. Bectors Food Specialities Ltd., reproduced for academic discussion.

3. SAJ Food Products

The front label of the *Eat Fit Digestive Biscuits* prominently asserted “100% Atta” However, the ingredients list on the back of the packaging declared only 72.33% atta. This absolute claim was flagged as misleading and in direct violation of the FSSAI advisory against utilizing “100%” claims on products that contain other additives and ingredients.

The packaging also featured a prominent “No Added Sugar” label. However, the ingredients declaration openly listed maltodextrin and glucose syrup solids. Regulators flagged the “No Added Sugar” statement as misleading because the product contained these high-glycemic sugar substitutes.⁴

The brand used the product name “Eat Fit Digestive”. The FSSAI noted that functional or descriptive product names like “Digestive” require strict, prior scientific justification under the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, which the company failed to provide.



Source: FSSAI Safe Food (@fssai_safefood), Instagram.

FSSAI issued a show-cause notice directing SAJ Food Products to furnish a detailed explanation within 7 days, failing which strict legal action under the FSS Act, 2006 would be initiated.⁵

⁴ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, *FSSAI Cracks Down on Food Businesses for Misleading Claims and Labelling Violations*, The FSSAI Bulletin, June 2026, Vol. 1, Issue 2, at 5.

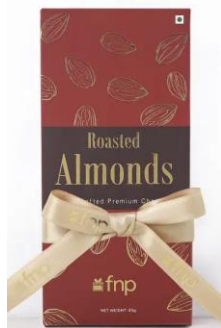
⁵ *In re SAJ Food Products Pvt. Ltd.*, Show Cause Notice, F.No. FSSAI/Enf/SCN/2026 (Food Safety & Standards Auth. of India June 10, 2026) (India).

What “Healthy,” “Natural,” and “Premium” Really Mean

1. Ferns N Petals Pvt. Ltd.

Roasted Almond Chocolate by Ferns N Petals Pvt. Ltd. was prominently marketed as a “*Premium Chocolate*”. One would assume that premium meant better quality ingredients or higher hygiene standards. FSSAI’s investigation on the contrary revealed that the formulation completely substituted genuine cocoa butter with cheap hydrogenated vegetable fat. This substitution compositional breach directly undermines the statutory benchmark for standardized chocolate, which strictly regulate the use of vegetable fat substitutes. The packaging failed to carry the basic mandatory packaging declarations required under FSSAI labelling norms.⁶

Despite highlighting “Roasted Almond” as a defining premium ingredient on the front of the pack, the company failed to disclose the actual percentage of almond content anywhere on its label. By utilizing the “Premium Chocolate” to sell a vegetable-fat substitute while omitting core compositional facts, the product stood in direct violation of Section 23 of the FSS Act, which forbids false or misleading claims regarding the nature, substance, or quality of packaged food.⁷



Source: FSSAI Safe Food (@fssai_safefood), Instagram.

2. Kubera Foods

Kubera Foods marketed its cream bun on the front-of-pack as “100% Natural” alongside a prominent, absolute claim of containing “No Preservatives, Colours & Flavours”. However, the mandatory ingredient declaration on the back of the very *same* package openly declared the inclusion of chemical preservatives, synthetic colours, and added flavouring substances.⁸

FSSAI officially objected to the brand's unauthorized and unsubstantiated use of high-priority descriptive terms like “Pure”, “Fresh”, and “Natural”. This represents a blatant, irreconcilable contradiction on a single product package. Under **Section 24(2)(a)** of the FSS Act, making a written or visible representation that falsely represents foods to be of a particular standard, quality, or grade-composition is a punishable offense.

⁷ *No Fruit in Fruit Candy, No Cocoa in Chocolate: FSSAI Cracks Down on Misleading Labels*, ETHealthworld (July 9, 2026), <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/no-fruit-in-fruit-candy-no-cocoa-in-chocolate-fssai-cracks-down-on-misleading-labels/132275151>.

⁸ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (@fssai_safefood), Instagram (July 5, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DZjYSZqIMzb/>.



Source: FSSAI Safe Food (@fssai_safefood), Instagram.

3. Troovy

Troovy marketed its processed *Mix Veggie Chips*, *Ragi chips* and *moong dal* chip products with prominent “**Healthy**” declarations across its retail lines.

The product’s packaging depicts a variety of vegetables which visually and textually implies a simple, pure veggie or grain snack, in contrast, the actual formulations contained several other standard processed ingredients and additives.⁹

Under the FSS (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, the term “Healthy” is a restricted descriptor. FBOs are prohibited from applying generic health related words to processed snack products that contain standard culinary fats, sodium, or processed fillers, as it deprives consumers of their right to make an informed choice.

4.The Whole Truth

Founded in 2019, The Whole Truth built its brand around ingredient transparency and clean-label positioning, offering products such as protein bars, chocolates, and packaged snacks. As consumer awareness around nutrition has grown, protein-rich products have witnessed a surge in popularity, with many consumers gravitating towards brands that market themselves as healthier alternatives. Capitalising on this shift, The Whole Truth promoted its products with claims such as “No Added Sugar”, encouraging consumers to perceive them as a healthier choice.

However, following a consumer complaint, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a notice directing the company to remove the “No Added Sugar” claim from its labels. Although the bars did not contain refined sugar, they were sweetened using dates, which are recognised as a source of sugar under the applicable regulatory framework. FSSAI concluded that the claim was liable to mislead consumers into believing that the product contained no added sweetening ingredients whatsoever.¹⁰

⁹ FSSAI Issues Notices to 8 Companies Over Misleading Names, Claims, ETRetail (June 15, 2026, 09:10 AM IST), <https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/food-entertainment/food-services/fssai-notices-to-8-companies-over-misleading-names-claims/131732122>.

¹⁰ Samiksha Goel, *Inside Food Companies' Scramble to Dial Back Health Claims*, **Mint** (July 13, 2026), <https://www.livemint.com/industry/fssai-crackdown-food-health-claims-11783941580997.html>.

5. Iota Water

The brand, *Iota Water* marketed its packaged drinking water by making misleading claims regarding the **addition of minerals**.

FSSAI standards and applicable food packaging regulations explicitly stipulate that **“No product shall claim the term 'added nutrients', if such nutrients have been added merely to compensate the nutrients lost or removed during processing of the food.”**¹¹

Packaged drinking water commonly undergoes reverse osmosis and filtration, which strips out naturally occurring minerals. Simply adding minerals back at the end of the filtration line to restore basic water quality does not legally permit a brand to claim “added nutrients” or imply a superior functional formulation. Making this representation violates the statutory prohibition against deceptive and unfair trade practices under the FSS Act.

The Illusion of Certification

In the modern consumer market, specialty designations such as **“Organic”** and **“Vegan”** serve as premium trust markers. Because consumers cannot visually distinguish an organic grain from a conventional one, or verify the absolute absence of animal-derived processing aids in a plant-based product, they rely entirely on the integrity of these labels. Consequently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has initiated a coordinated enforcement drive against brands that exploit these high-trust categories by embedding specialty claims directly into their trade names to bypass mandatory statutory certification procedures.

1. Plan B

The company, marketed its products using the trade name **“PLAN B Plant-Based Vegan”**. FSSAI’s investigation revealed that the products had not been cleared, certified, or endorsed as “vegan” under the company’s FSSAI license.

Under the FSS Act, utilizing a specialized lifestyle descriptor like “Vegan” within a corporate trade or brand name is not a loophole to evade licensing requirements. FSSAI clarified that using “Vegan” in a brand's trade name is highly likely to give consumers a false representation regarding the official certification status of the food. Under FSSAI regulations, no Food Business Operator (FBO) can market or imply that a product is vegan unless they have secured the mandatory **vegan food endorsement** on their official FSSAI license.¹²

To formalize this ecosystem, FSSAI has notified the **Food Safety and Standards (Vegan Foods) Amendment Regulations, 2026** (effective **July 1, 2027**). Under these revised provisions, every approved vegan food package will be legally required to prominently display the prescribed official FSSAI Vegan Logo (featuring a green “V” with a leaf inside) on its packaging. This mandatory framework is designed to eliminate misleading plant-based claims and facilitate easy retail identification.

¹¹ Pallav Mishra, *Food Authority Issues Notices Over Misleading 'Healthy' And 'Organic' Claims*, NDTV Food (June 14, 2026, 17:57 IST), <https://food.ndtv.com/food-news/food-authority-issues-notices-over-misleading-healthy-and-organic-claims-11635057>.

¹² ET Bureau, *FSSAI issues notices to 8 companies over misleading names, claims*, ETRetail (June 15, 2026, 9:10 AM IST), <https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/food-entertainment/food-services/fssai-notices-to-8-companies-over-misleading-names-claims/131732122>.

2. Cipzer Nutraceuticals

In a similar vein, FSSAI also issued a notice to Cipzer Nutraceuticals, a line of herbal dietary supplements and juices, as the packaging bears a confident claim of “FSSAI approved”, this is likely to give the false impression to the consumer that it has been especially endorsed by the regulator. This is a clear case of smart marketing.¹³

The product also alleges to “boost your immune system” and “remove toxins”. These assertions however, have no basis or any scientific substantiation to support them. The image on the front of the pack consists of a variety of colourful vegetables that might easily lead any consumer to believe that the capsules actually contained them. Strip away the branding and imagery, and you'll find that not a single one of these vegetables is actually listed among the ingredients.

The buzzword Business

The modern beverage industry sells more than just drinks, it sells *energy, focus, vitality, and premium craftsmanship*. But FSSAI's recent enforcement drive suggests that many of these promises are marketing dreams rather than legally recognized product attributes. From so-called “Energy Drinks” to age statements on alcoholic beverages, regulators are increasingly scrutinizing claims that lack statutory backing.

Several leading beverage brands, including Red Bull, PepsiCo (*Sting* and *Adrenaline Rush*) and Hell Energy, received notices for marketing their products as “Energy Drinks.” FSSAI clarified that Indian food law does not even recognize “Energy Drink” as a notified food category. FSSAI reiterated that it is merely an administrative classification and cannot be used as a commercial product designation.¹⁴

The notices also questioned a series of functional claims, including statements such as “*vitalizes body and mind,*” “*enhances focus,*” “*boosts energy levels,*” and “*aids in general weakness.*” Unless supported by strong scientific evidence and permitted under the regulatory framework, such claims risk violating **Section 24 of the FSS Act**, which prohibits misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices.¹⁵

The crackdown extended beyond caffeinated beverages to India's alcoholic beverage industry. FSSAI issued notices to manufacturers of rum, whisky, gin, brandy, wine, and beer for practices that allegedly distorted the true identity of their products. Some manufacturers were found using synthetic flavouring agents to imitate the natural taste and aroma of spirits, contrary to the Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages) Regulations, 2018, which require these beverages to possess their genuine characteristic flavour.¹⁶

Regulators also objected to misleading age-related representations. Manufacturers used descriptors such as “*old,*” “*rare,*” and similar expressions without complying with the regulatory requirements governing age declarations. In blended spirits, FSSAI reiterated that any age statement must refer to the youngest spirit in the blend, preventing manufacturers from highlighting only the oldest component to create an exaggerated impression of quality. Such practices, according to the regulator, amount to misbranding, as they misrepresent the nature and quality of the product offered to consumers.

¹³ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (@fssaiindia), *Post regarding action against Cipzer Nutraceuticals*, X (July 6, 2026, 11:00 am), <https://x.com/fssaiindia/status/2074086022514876507>.

¹⁴ Press Trust of India, *FSSAI Crackdown on Energy Drink Brands; Issues Notices to 6 Firms Including Red Bull, Pepsico*,

¹⁵ ETHealthworld (July 3, 2026, 4:57 PM IST), <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/fssai-crackdown-on-energy-drink-brands-issues-notices-to-6-firms-including-red-bull-pepsico/132159920>

¹⁶ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (@fssai_safefood), Instagram (July 10, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DakP3szvaul/?hl=en>



Source: FSSAI Safe Food (@fssai_safefood), Instagram.

To feed the eyes, but fail the stomach

Recent enforcement actions by food safety authorities across the country revealed a disturbing pattern of adulteration, unhygienic processing, and deliberate cosmetic alterations designed to make unsafe food appear fresh, wholesome, and fit for consumption.

In Mehsana, Gujarat, authorities seized nearly 26 tonnes of fennel seeds after discovering that faded and substandard produce had been artificially coloured with hazardous green chemical dyes to restore the appearance of freshness. Rather than improving quality, the dyes merely disguised deterioration, exposing consumers to potentially harmful chemical adulterants.¹⁷

A series of inspections by the Food Safety and Drug Administration, Lucknow, uncovered similarly alarming practices. At a spice warehouse in Transport Nagar, officials seized 145 kg of expired spices, including turmeric, coriander, garam masala, and red chilli powder, that continued to be stored for commercial distribution despite having crossed their shelf life.¹⁸

The most striking seizure occurred at a pickle manufacturing unit in Bakshi Ka Talab, where authorities destroyed approximately 8.5 tonnes of mango, lemon, cauliflower, carrot, ginger, and chilli pickles after finding them rotten, foul-smelling, and heavily contaminated with fungal growth. Instead of being discarded, the products had remained within the manufacturing process, posing an obvious risk to public health.¹⁹

In another enforcement action at Iradat Nagar, inspectors seized 8,983 kg of spices and raw materials and ordered the immediate closure of a processing facility after discovering severe hygiene deficiencies, suspected bulk chemical adulterants, and widespread violations of basic food safety standards.

These incidents illustrate that food fraud extends far beyond exaggerated marketing claims. Whether through artificial colouring, unhygienic processing, or the sale of deteriorated products, such practices

¹⁷ TNN, *26 Tonnes of Fennel Adulterated with Chemical Colours Seized in Mehsana District of Gujarat*, **Times of India** (July 10, 2026, 12:48 AM IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/26-tonnes-of-fennel-adulterated-with-chemical-colours-seized-in-mehsana-district-of-gujarat/articleshow/132297459.cms>.

¹⁸ TNN, *FSDA Cracks Down on Adulterated Food, Nearly 18 Tonnes Seized or Destroyed in Lucknow*, **Times of India** (July 10, 2026), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/fsda-cracks-down-on-adulterated-food-nearly-18-tonnes-seized-or-destroyed-in-lucknow/articleshow/132317002.cms>.

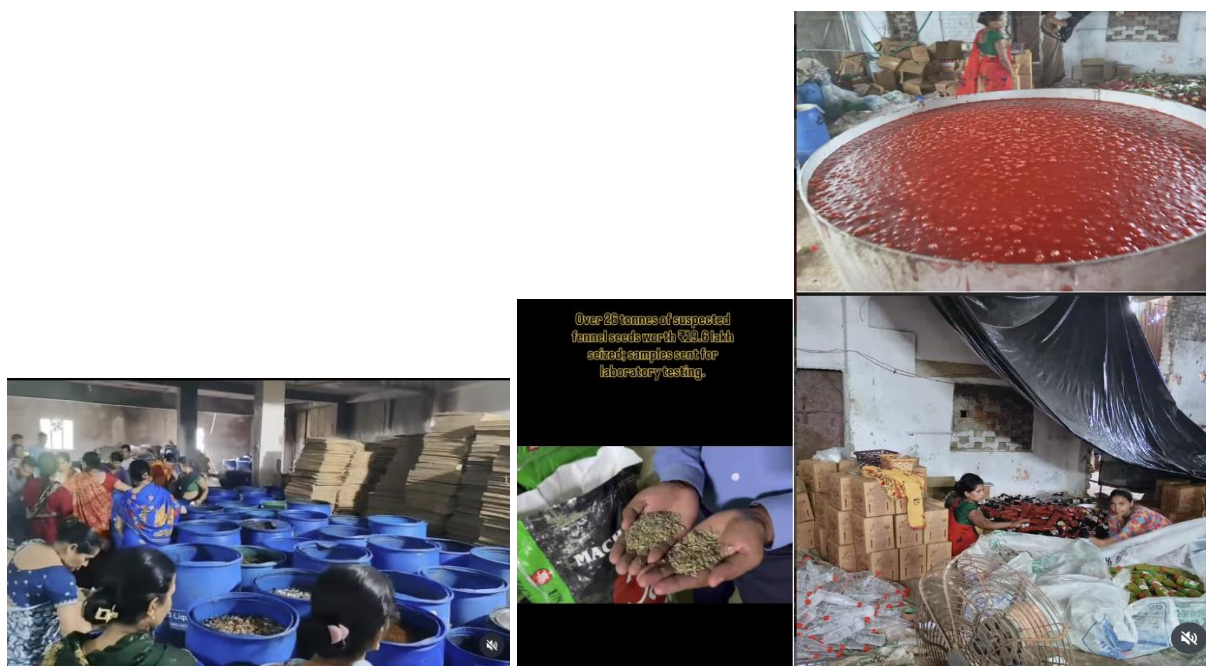
undermine the fundamental objective of the FSS Act, that is to ensure that the food offered to consumers is genuinely safe, and fit for human consumption.

Alkaline water

Failing the Basic Test of food safety requirements stands the seizure of an "alkaline water" manufacturer in Vadodara, Gujarat, where FSSAI uncovered a series of labelling violations and the presence of a non-permitted ingredient.

The action followed a consumer complaint alleging that the Food Business Operator (FBO) had failed to address grievances. This prompted FSSAI to conduct a post-licence inspection of the company's manufacturing facility in Savli, Vadodara. Inspecting officers found multiple violations, including the absence of the product name on the front of the package, missing ingredient declarations, and visible black particles in the bottled water. Further examination revealed unexplained blackish-brown discolouration, sediment deposits, and inconsistencies between the primary and secondary packaging.

Considering the seriousness of these malpractices, FSSAI seized stock worth approximately **₹31.61 lakh** and initiated proceedings under the **FSS Act**. Laboratory analysis subsequently detected **fulvic acid**, a substance not permitted under food safety laws. The investigation concluded that the compound had been introduced through the addition of black mineral substances rather than occurring naturally in the water, confirming that the product was not compliant with the prescribed food safety requirements.²⁰



Source: FSSAI Safe Food (@fssai_safefood), Instagram.

Conclusion

With greater access to information and growing awareness about nutrition, India's younger population is increasingly prioritising healthy and safe food choices. This shift has created a strong demand for products marketed as nutritious, wholesome, and healthier alternatives. However, the same trend has also provided brands with an opportunity to capitalise on consumer expectations by promoting products through attractive labels and health-oriented claims that may not always withstand regulatory scrutiny. As

²⁰ Food Safety and Standards Auth. of India West Region, Press Release, *FSSAI West Region Seizes Misbranded "Alkaline Water" for Use of Non-Permitted Ingredients and Labelling Violations* (May 7, 2026),

consumer consciousness evolves, claims of quality, purity, and healthfulness must be supported by adequate testing, transparent disclosure, and verifiable evidence.

The recent surge in enforcement actions highlights a significant transformation in India's food safety landscape. Regulatory scrutiny now extends far beyond laboratory testing to include ingredient declarations, advertising claims, licensing compliance, storage practices, overall transparency and everything in compliance with applicable laws. Cases involving misleading health claims, unauthorised use of terms such as "organic", "vegan" or "healthy", sale of expired products, and unsafe manufacturing conditions drive a single message that consumers are entitled to food that is both safe and accurately represented.

Much of this enforcement has been triggered through consumer complaints, routine inspections, and surveillance activities, reflecting FSSAI's increasingly proactive approach to regulation. Equally important is the regulator's emphasis on consumer participation. By encouraging individuals to read labels carefully, verify ingredients and certifications, check expiry dates, and use grievance mechanisms such as the Food Safety Compliance System (FoSCoS), FSSAI is fostering a culture in which food safety becomes a shared responsibility between regulators, businesses, and consumers.