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Regulator to set up body to test wide range of food products

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Waking up to a whole range of products that exploit legal loopholes, the country's food regulator, FSSAI, is setting up an experts' panel which will look into all these items including sweets, confectionaries and honey. "We will refer these to scientific panels that will review and lay down the norms for such food products. The panels will be set up in the next one week or 10 days," FSSAI CEO Yudhvir Singh Malik told TOI.

Moreover, FSSAI and consumer affairs ministry are chalking out a joint publicity plan under "Jago Grahak Jago" to inform people that they should read the label before buying what they see as chocolates.

Though FSSAI norms don't allow any use of vegetable fat in chocolates, in the past the agency has given product approval for chocolates that have vegetable content up to 5% since the norms approved by CODEX (international standard for food items) allow this.

FSSAI defines chocolate as "a homogeneous product obtained by an adequate process of manufacture from a mixture of one or more of the ingredients, namely, cocoa beans, cocoa nib, cocoa mass, cocoa press cake and cocoa dust (cocoa fines/powder), including fat reduced cocoa powder with or without addition of sugars, cocoa butter, milk solids including milk fat. The chocolates shall not contain any vegetable fat other than cocoa butter".

An independent analysis of chocolates in India in 2008 had found these products high on sugar, fudge cocoa and vegetable oil in violation of standards.

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