



FSSAI issues notices to alcoholic beverage makers over flavour, age claims



Mint 12 hrs ago

India's food safety regulator has issued notices to alcoholic beverage manufacturers after finding alleged violations of rules governing added flavours and age claims, setting up a fresh regulatory dispute with the liquor industry.

ADVERTISEMENT

inspections found some manufacturers adding flavours to products such as rum, brandy, gin, whisky, wine and beer to replicate their natural taste and aroma, contrary to food safety regulations.

"Certain manufacturers are blending added flavors that mimic a product's natural profile (e.g., in Rum, Brandy, Gin, Malt/Grain Whisky, Wine, and Beer). This directly contravenes the regulation stating that these products must exclusively possess their true, natural characteristic taste and aroma," the regulator said.

FSSAI also flagged violations relating to age declarations on product labels.

"FBOs (food business operators) are making unauthorized age claims using words, synonyms, or indirect expressions denoting age without strictly adhering to Regulation 1.3.7 of the FSS (Alcoholic Beverages) Regulations, 2018," the regulator stated.

For blended spirits, the age declared on the label must correspond to the youngest spirit used in the blend. "Products carrying the word "aged" or associated age claims have failed to ensure that the declared age refers strictly to the youngest spirit utilized in the blend," FSSAI said in the Instagram post.

The regulator directed the companies to bring their operations in line with the regulations and explain why action should not be initiated under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

"The concerned companies have been directed to ensure compliance and submit an explanation as to why action should not be initiated under the provisions of the FSS Act, 2006, and the Rules & Regulations made thereunder," it added.

The enforcement comes as India's alcoholic beverages market, valued at \$148.3 billion in 2025, is projected to reach \$176.2 billion by 2034, according to a government report citing market research firm IMARC Group. India is among the world's fastest-growing alcohol markets, driven by urbanization and rising disposable incomes, with distilled spirits accounting for a large share of consumption by value.

Regulatory rift

The industry, however, said the issue is one of regulatory interpretation rather than product safety.

discuss the issues. "All our members strictly follow all laid norms and guidelines mandated by FSSAI."

Mint also spoke to industry representatives, who said the dispute centres on the interpretation of food safety standards rather than the safety of Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) products. Sanjit Padhi, chief executive of the International Spirits and Wines Association of India (ISWAI), said, "ISWAI and its members are in compliance with regulations and will engage with FSSAI for clarity, further interpretation."

An industry executive, speaking on condition of anonymity, said manufacturers use nature-identical flavours because extended barrel ageing is commercially unviable in India.

"Manufacturers use natural-identical flavours and have long been a legitimate and necessary part of producing affordable spirits in India, where prolonged barrel ageing is commercially unviable due to high inventory costs, imported barrel costs and significant evaporation losses. In fact identical flavours, too, are procured from FSSAI approved vendors," the person said.

The executive added that the IMFL category was created under colonial-era excise laws to suit Indian climatic conditions and consumer affordability, making it distinct from spirits produced in Europe.

According to the person, IMFL manufacturers comply with FSSAI regulations notified in 2018, Bureau of Indian Standards norms and state excise laws, with every batch tested by government laboratories before reaching consumers. The person said the notices have been issued to a broad set of domestic and multinational liquor companies manufacturing in India, and that the regulator's directions have been challenged before the Bombay High Court.

The industry maintains the dispute concerns permitted ingredients and labelling requirements, not the safety of products currently on the market.

"This is not a food safety issue. It's a regulatory interpretation issue. Nature-identical flavours have been used in IMFL for decades because they make affordable spirits possible in India, where long ageing is commercially unviable. Every product is manufactured under state excise supervision, tested by government laboratories and complies with the standards notified by FSSAI in 2018. Consumers should not infer that the products they have been drinking are unsafe," said one person in the know.

She said the use of colours-both natural and synthetic-is widespread across whisky, brandy, rum, RTDs and flavoured vodka, with lower-priced products often relying on synthetic colours because natural alternatives are imported, have a shorter shelf life and can fade on contact with alcohol. Chandel also said age claims are difficult to verify through laboratory testing, making it easy for manufacturers using malts of varying ages to misstate the age declared on labels.

ADVERTISEMENT



Mint

87k followers 230k Stories

Dailyhunt

Disclaimer: This content has not been generated, created or edited by Dailyhunt. Publisher: Mint English

ADVERTISEMENT