

Standing Committee Report Summary

Regulation of Packaged Commodities with Specific Reference to Sugar Content in Baby Products

- The Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Chair: Ms. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi) presented its report on 'Regulation of Packaged Commodities with Specific Reference to Sugar Content in Baby Products and Other Food Products' on July 23, 2026. The Committee noted that excessive sugar intake from packaged foods poses health risks. Key observations and recommendations include:
 - **Mandatory sugar-level classification:** The Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020 mandate disclosure of total sugar and added sugar content on packaged food labels. Disclosure of sugar content is in absolute number and as a percentage of the recommended dietary allowance. The Committee observed that these disclosures may not be easily understood by all consumers at the point of purchase. It may not be helpful in interpreting if sugar-levels are high or low. Absence of simple interpretative tools such as warning labels or colour-coded indicatory limits reduces the effectiveness of disclosures. It recommended introducing a mandatory sugar-level classification framework, in accordance with scientific thresholds recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Additionally, sugar disclosure and labelling requirements should be uniformly applied to all packaged food categories.
 - **Front-of-pack labelling:** The front-of-pack labelling helps consumers easily identify the nutritional status of a product. The Committee noted that the draft Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling Regulations were released in September 2022 for public feedback. However, final Regulations have not been notified. It recommended that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) finalise and notify these Regulations. It also recommended including labelling mechanisms such as colour-coded indicators to denote high, medium, and low sugar levels. Further, a front-of-pack declaration for infant products should state the percentage contribution to the daily energy requirement of the target age.
 - **Regulating sugar content:** The Committee recommended that limits of sugar in infant packaged foods should be periodically reviewed every two to three years by the scientific bodies of FSSAI. It also recommended that formulations with zero or minimal added sugar should be promoted. Further, FSSAI should ensure: (i) graded penalties for repeated violations of misleading claims, (ii) mandatory timelines for withdrawal or correction of non-complaint advertisements, (iii) regular public disclosure of violations, and (iv) a consumer reporting mechanism through a digital platform.
 - **Periodic re-verification:** The Committee observed that there is no structured framework for periodic re-verification of product formulations after initial approval or licencing. Subsequent reformulation may increase sugar content and introduce other changes in ingredient composition, and may go undetected. It recommended FSSAI to institutionalise a periodic or risk-based re-verification mechanism after approval.
 - **Third-party substantiation:** The Committee noted that in the absence of independent verification, consumers may not be fully assured of claims by food business operators. It recommended FSSAI to strengthen the framework for third-party scientific substantiation of sugar-related and health claims. It should prescribe mandatory independent validation. An empanelled list of independent scientific institutions should be authorised to review and certify supportive evidence.
 - **Consumer awareness campaigns:** The Committee observed that informing consumers about the WHO and ICMR recommendations may translate to long-term behavioural change. It recommended that nationwide consumer campaigns, such as the "Eat Right" initiative, be introduced. It also recommended targeted outreach through schools, anganwadis, maternity clinics and digital platforms.
 - **Monitoring e-commerce products:** The Committee observed a rapid expansion of packaged products being sold on digital e-commerce platforms. It recommended establishing a dedicated monitoring mechanism to address issues related to mislabelled packaged food products sold on these platforms. It also recommended a closer coordination between FSSAI and the Department of Consumer Affairs for this purpose.

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