



CONSUMER UPDATE

An important step towards trans fat free India!

The most awaited regulations, limiting the quantity of trans fat or trans fatty acids (TFA) in oils and fats to 3 per cent from January 2021 and 2 per cent from January 2022, from the previous limit of 5 per cent, were notified by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on December 29, 2020. The regulation is a significant move in the sphere of public health with the potential to prevent thousands of deaths from noncommunicable diseases caused due to consumption of trans fat.



Trans fat is a [major contributor](#) for cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and studies reveal that globally, thousands of people die of CVDs every year. Recognising the impact of trans fat on public health, the Indian Government took the first step to regulate trans fat in 2011 where it fixed the limits of trans fat in oils and fats at 10% by its weight. In 2015, the limits were further reduced to 5%. In the meantime, several countries started introducing regulations to eliminate trans fat from their food supply chain. The World Health Organization (WHO) came out with a strategy to eliminate trans fat from global food supply by 2023. India, on its part, announced its commitment to eliminate trans fat by 2022, one year ahead of the WHO mandate. Accordingly, the FSSAI issued the draft Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Amendment Regulations in 2019 which stated that edible oils and fats shall not contain trans fat more than 2 per cent by weight of the total oils or fats present in the product by 2022.

In order to get the regulations notified soon, CAG, along with other groups such as CUTS International, Consumer Voice, Generation Saviour Association (GSA) and DISHA Foundation, presented an eight point Charter of Demands to the FSSAI, highlighting immediate steps to be taken for the elimination of trans fats from the Indian food system by 2022 and specifically demanding for earliest notification of regulations with two per cent limit of trans-fats for oils, fats, and all food products.

In addition, realising the importance of eliminating trans fat from the food supply chain, more than 30 civil society organisations from Tamil Nadu joined hands with CAG in writing to the FSSAI, demanding for early notification of the regulations and for its effective implementation in the state. CAG also ran a signature campaign, where more than 7000 consumers, including students, doctors, food safety officials and media, from Chennai, Nagapattinam, Coimbatore, Erode, and other districts of Tamil Nadu showed their support in eliminating trans fat from the food supply chain.

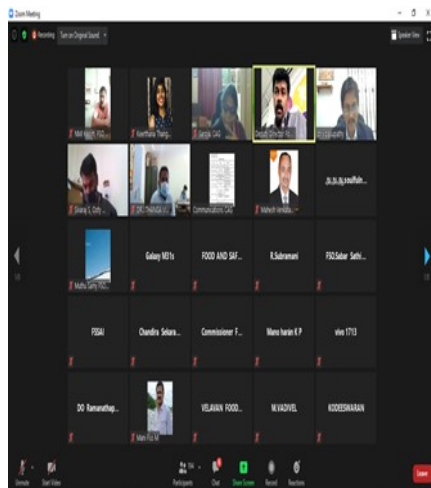
In order to save lives from cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases, immediate implementation of the regulations is crucial. Hence, the state food safety department should take all measures to strengthen their laboratories with proper accreditations and do periodical testing of oil and fat samples to ensure compliance. Other stakeholders, including the oil industries and food business operators should avoid using products rich in trans fat and look for alternatives, so that they provide safe and healthy food to consumers.

Will consumer protection ever be a priority in India?

When the progressive legislation, Consumer Protection Act 2019, came into force in July 2020 there was much optimism as consumers believed that they were finally crowned the king in the marketplace. However, the euphoria has doused since then, as the states are yet to notify the rules. In addition, several vacancies in the Consumer Commissions have impeded the disposal of cases over the last many months. States keep delaying appointments with the result that the complainants are suffering and consumers are fast losing faith in the system.

CAG and other consumer organisations have repeatedly represented the matter to the government, but to no avail. Recently, [the Prime Minister](#), in his meeting with the Secretaries of the Centre and States, has urged the states to fill up vacancies quickly for speedy redressal of complaints. How soon are the states going to act upon is anybody's guess!

Orientation programme on trans fat for Designated and Food Safety Officers of Tamil Nadu Food Safety Department



CAG, in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Food Safety Department, organised an [orientation e-program](#) for the Designated Officers (DOs) and the Food Safety Officers (FSOs) of the state, to familiarise them about trans fat and its ill effects, the science behind it, existing and proposed international and national policies, and the need for effective implementation. The orientation program was scheduled as a web meeting on 11 November 2020, where more than 240 DOs and FSOs from all the districts of Tamil Nadu participated. Speakers included Dr. P. Raghu - Scientist, National Institute of Nutrition; Mr. Ranjit Singh - Advocate practicing in the Supreme Court; Dr. Roopa Shivashankar - Senior Consultant on Nutrition and Cardiovascular Health, Resolve to Save Lives, Vital Strategies; Dr. Swati Bhardwaj and Dr. Meenu Singh - Consultants with FSSAI; Dr. Pasupathi Venkat - Lead Food Expert, FOSTAC - FSSAI.

Awareness on consumer rights through visual medium

Saroja from CAG, explained about [guarantee and warranty](#) in 'Arivom Thelivom' program on News18 Channel.

National Consumer Rights Day falls on December 24. To commemorate the day, Podhigai TV invited Saroja to speak on consumer rights and the [salient features of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#) in its live program 'Pudhiya Vellicham'.



Multi stakeholder e-meetings on trans fat - Karur, Theni, Nilgiris and Dharmapuri

CAG conducted four multi stakeholder e-meetings in [Karur](#), [Theni](#), Nilgiris, and Dharmapuri districts of Tamil Nadu in November and December 2020 to highlight the need for elimination of trans fat from the food supply chain. The events saw the participation of the Designated Officers, Food Safety Officers from the Tamil Nadu Food Safety Department, experts from FSSAI, doctors, and healthcare professionals, nutritionists, representatives from edible oil industry, food business operators, civil society organisations and consumers.

Telecom subscription data as on November 30th, 2020

Highlights of Telecom Subscription Data as on 30th November, 2020

Particulars	Wireless	Wireline	Total (Wireless+ Wireline)
Total Telephone Subscribers (Million)	1155.20	20.07	1175.27
Net Addition in November, 2020 (Million)	3.39	0.08	3.47
Monthly Growth Rate	0.29%	0.40%	0.30%
Urban Telephone Subscribers (Million)	630.40	18.20	648.60
Net Addition in November, 2020 (Million)	1.12	0.18	1.30
Monthly Growth Rate	0.18%	1.02%	0.20%
Rural Telephone Subscribers (Million)	524.80	1.87	526.67
Net Addition in November, 2020 (Million)	2.27	-0.10	2.17
Monthly Growth Rate	0.43%	-5.23%	0.41%
Overall Tele-density* (%)	85.08%	1.48%	86.56%
Urban Tele-density* (%)	134.82%	3.89%	138.72%
Rural Tele-density* (%)	58.95%	0.21%	59.16%
Share of Urban Subscribers	54.57%	90.67%	55.19%
Share of Rural Subscribers	45.43%	9.33%	44.81%
Broadband Subscribers (Million)	720.18	21.89	742.06

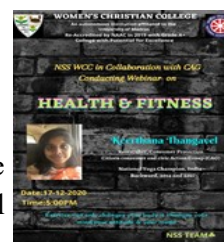
(Source : [TRAI](#))

Guest lectures on Green Consumerism; health and fitness



Savitha from CAG addressed the students of Kathir College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore on the importance and need for responsible consumption.

Keerthana from CAG addressed the students of Women's Christian College, Chennai, on the importance of physical and mental fitness and how they play an important role for one's well being. She also highlighted the significance of a low calorie, balanced diet for good health.



FSSAI notifies the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020.

The Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has divided the Food Safety (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011, into two:

- (i) the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018; and
- (ii) the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019

The authority has recently notified [the Food Safety and Standards \(Labelling and Display\) Regulations, 2020](#) effective from January 2022. These regulations prescribe the labelling requirements of pre-packaged foods and display of essential information on premises where food is manufactured, processed, served and stored. It lists out vital information like nutritional information, ingredients with class titles wherever necessary, details of compound ingredient if it constitutes more than 5%, vegetarian/ non-vegetarian logo, additives, food allergens, FSSAI licence, logo, declaration of name, address, date of expiry, etc., that should be provided on the principal display panel of the package or container, at one place, in a legible manner.

DocTalk on Trans fat

Dr Arun Kumar, Bariatric and Advanced Laparoscopic Surgeon, [talks about the harmful effects of trans fat.](#)

Dr Pavithra, OGcian and Fertility specialist lists out the [harm caused due to consumption](#) of unhealthy foods, especially trans fat-rich food.



[Listen to the podcast](#) on **CAG's survey on trans fat awareness in Tamil Nadu**



CAG

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CAG is a 35 year old non profit, non political, professional organization working towards protecting citizen's rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance including transparency, accountability and participatory decision making.

The complaints cell at CAG addresses specific problems of consumers. Also CAG regularly conducts consumer awareness programmes for schools, colleges and special target groups.

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