



Issue No. 176

April-2025

# FOOD PRO

Monthly E-Newsletter of All India Food Processors' Association

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**For Space Booking, Kindly Contact**

Mr. Rameshwar Maurya, Manager - Projects, All India Food Processors' Association  
Tel. No.: +91 11 41550860 | Mobile: +91 8744088116, Email: maurya@aifpa.net



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**For Space Booking, Kindly Contact:**  
Rameshwar Maurya, Manager - Projects  
All India Food Processors' Association  
Mobile: +91 8744088116  
Email: [maurya@aifpa.net](mailto:maurya@aifpa.net)





## Regulatory & Food Safety Updates

### 12% samples tested at Assam lab fail to conform to standards



Close to 12 per cent food samples tested at the state public health laboratory in Assam have failed to conform to the standards. According to local media reports, 7,682 food samples were collected in this fiscal, of which 75 perishable items & 434 non-perishable items were found unsafe.

The unsafe samples include tea, fruits, & vegetables wherein higher pesticides residues than prescribed limit were found. The other samples included cereals, spices, milk, milk products, edible oils and salt.

The report adds that 19 other perishable and 268 non-perishable products were found substandard along with 23 cases of misbranding while around 1,000 samples were still under process of analysis.

A special drive was organised by the state food safety commissionerate in January throughout the state to ascertain safety of the food products.

The state food safety department has also initiated sanction of prosecution in 76 cases where food was found unsafe, adjudication was granted for 71 samples found substandard while other cases were under enquiry.

### BIS cracks down on e-commerce platforms selling unsafe, non-certified products

In a decisive move to curb the distribution of non-compliant consumer goods, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), has launched a series of search and seizure operations targeting major e-commerce platforms, including Amazon and Flipkart.



Conducted in cities like Lucknow, Gurugram, and Delhi, these raids uncovered a large quantity of products lacking mandatory BIS certification, raising serious concerns about consumer safety.

BIS seized 215 uncertified toys and 24 hand blenders from an Amazon warehouse in Lucknow. A similar raid in February at Amazon's Gurugram facility led to the confiscation of 58 aluminium foils, 34 metallic water bottles, 25 toys, 20 hand blenders, 7 PVC cables, 2 food mixers, and 1 speaker-all non-certified. Meanwhile, at a Flipkart warehouse in Gurugram, BIS found 534 uncertified stainless-steel vacuum-insulated bottles, 134 toys, and 41 speakers.

Further investigations linked these violations to Techvision International Pvt. Ltd., prompting raids at two of its Delhi facilities. Authorities seized nearly 7,000 electric water heaters, 4,000 electric food mixers, 95 electric room heaters, and 40 gas stoves from brands like Digismart, Aactiva, Inalsa, Cello Swift, and Butterfly, all lacking BIS certification.

Legal action has been initiated against Techvision International Pvt Ltd under Sections 17(1) and 17(3) of the BIS Act, 2016. Defaulters could face penalties starting at Rs 2 lakh, extending up to ten times the product value, along with imprisonment of up to two years. Additional cases are being filed against other violators.

BIS is intensifying market surveillance to ensure that consumer products, especially those available online, meet required safety and quality standards. Products under scrutiny include domestic pressure cookers, blenders, food mixers, electric irons, room heaters, PVC cables, gas stoves, toys, helmets, switches, and aluminium foils. Despite the government making BIS certification mandatory for these items, non-certified versions continue to be sold on platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, Myntra, and BigBasket.

Consumers are urged to verify product certification using the BIS Care app, which provides information on mandatory BIS-certified products and allows users to report violations. BIS has also issued notices to e-commerce platforms, directing them to ensure that all required products carry valid BIS certification before being listed for sale.

By taking stringent action, BIS aims to enhance consumer safety, eliminate substandard products from the market, and hold sellers accountable for compliance violations.

## FSSAI clarifies, labs need to test only for standards set for in-shell nuts



The food authority has issued a clarification with respect to testing of 'in-shell' nuts such as almonds by notified food testing laboratories. The FSSAI in an order has stated that labs are required to test only for the standards set for in-shell nuts and no other parameters.

It is hereby informed that the sub-regulation 2.3.47 (5) prescribes the standards of dry fruits and nuts, which covers the unshelled (In shell) Nuts. Therefore, all the FSSAI notified food testing laboratories u/s 43(1) and 43(2) of FSS Act, 2006, are hereby informed and instructed to test all such products (In-shell) against the said standards only, reads the order.

According to Mr. Ashwin Bhadri, Founder and CEO Equinox Lab, testing dry fruits follows a structured process designed to ensure both safety and quality. Labs assess key factors like moisture levels, aflatoxin presence, and pesticide residues. Additional checks for microbial contamination and heavy metals are also conducted. Following these FSSAI-prescribed standards is crucial to maintaining food safety and consumer trust.

However, there's been some confusion about testing in-shell nuts like almonds and it came to the notice of FSSAI that some labs were applying multiple standards, which caused uncertainty among stakeholders. He added that this order now clears the air-in-shell nuts should be tested strictly under the prescribed dry fruit and nut standards. Such clarity is essential to ensure consistency in food safety practices.

This order makes it clear that in-shell nuts must be tested using the standards set for dry fruits and nuts. By specifying this, FSSAI has ensured that labs apply the correct parameters for unshelled products like almonds. This step eliminates ambiguity, streamlining the testing process for both businesses and laboratories, while ensuring consumer safety.

## FSSAI introduces new KoB for Anganwadis ensuring food safety compliance

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has introduced a new Kind of Business (KoB) for Anganwadi Centres (run under the Integrated Child Development Service), as these centres provide supplementary nutrition to every pregnant woman and lactating mother for 6 months after child birth and require to comply with the food safety norms.



To facilitate the scheme, the Food Authority has decided to introduce a separate Kind of Business (KoB) 'Anganwadi (ICDS) Centre under the Food Service for Registration, reads the order issued by FSSAI.

The order added that such registration shall be free of cost. Additionally, the registration fees for Anganwadi (ICDS) Centre will be waived, and they will be granted the registration certificate for five years, the order added.

This waiver of the registration fee will also be applicable for renewal of three registration certificates by all such Anganwadi Centres and to facilitate the registration, a manual is provided on the FoSCoS website. The waiver of the registration fee for Anganwadi Centres shall come into effect from the date of issuance of the order (March 12, 2025) and there shall be no refund for the existing applications under process. According to the FSSAI, the order will help in maintaining food safety compliance at such centres across the country.

## FSSAI issues draft vegan norms prescribing cert issued by exporting country



The food authority has issued a draft related to vegan regulations prescribing the certificate to be issued by the recognised authority of the exporting country.

Called the Food Safety and Standards (Vegan Foods) Amendment Regulations, 2025, it proposes to add format of the certificate under sub regulation 3 of regulation 5 related to vegan food compliance. The certificate called form 1 is prescribed under these regulations. Under the proposed norms, the exporter is required to submit five declarations prescribed in the form 1.

The declaration includes a) the food product(s) has not involved any animal testing for any purpose including safety evaluation, unless provided by any Regulatory Authority, b) the stages of production, processing, and distribution are designed with appropriate precautions in conformity with Good Manufacturing Practices to avoid the unintended presence of non-vegan substances, c) vegan and non-vegan raw materials are stored separately and the production line of the company is separate from non-vegan products or ingredients, d) thorough cleaning or comparable measures in conformity with Good Manufacturing Practices carried out before production of vegan products, & also for all associated machinery, equipment, utensils, and surfaces and e) backward traceability of ingredients and their source is established.



The form 1 specifies the requirement for the certification from the country of dispatch. The required info includes consignor/exporter name, address, certificate number, & recognised authority of the exporting country and its contact details. According to FSSAI, the certificate was needed in accordance with the growing vegan trade and maintaining the compliance prescribed under the Vegan Regulations in India.

Meanwhile, the form 1 further requires exporter to reveal/detail conditions for transport/storage, product description which includes name of the product with nearest food category as per FSSR, manufacturer name & address, lot number, net weight, no. of units/packages, type of packaging, date of manufacturing/packaging, & date of expiry.

Besides, the proposed amendment calls for requirement of product composition and intended purpose and whether the product is meant for repacking or relabelling in the destination country. And If yes, then the exporter is required to give details of premises for inspection clearance. The stakeholders were asked to submit their suggestions on the same.

### **Gauhati HC Lowers GST on Fruit-Based Fizzy Drinks to 12%**



**I**n a significant ruling, the Gauhati High Court has directed that fruit-based carbonated drinks be taxed at a lower 12% GST rate instead of the previous 28%, offering relief to consumers and manufacturers alike.

The ruling came in favor of X'SS Beverage, a manufacturer of carbonated juice drinks, which had been contesting a hefty tax demand that included penalties and interest. The court's decision is expected to reduce the prices of popular juice-based fizzy drinks in the market.

The GST authorities had previously classified these beverages under the 28% tax slab applicable to soft drinks, arguing that their carbonated water content justified the higher rate.

However, X'SS Beverage successfully argued that fruit juice was the primary ingredient, giving the product its essential character and qualifying it for the lower 12% GST rate.

The court referred to the Rules for Interpretation of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, which guides product classification based on a product's essential nature when it does not fit neatly into a single category. The judgment also cited past rulings, including a case involving Parle Agro's 'Appy Fizz', further strengthening the argument for a reduced tax rate.

Legal experts believe this ruling will set a strong precedent for future disputes regarding the classification of carbonated fruit drinks. The court rightly examined key aspects such as ingredient composition, manufacturing process, product marketing, and labeling to reach its decision, said Harpreet Singh, Partner, Indirect Tax, Deloitte-India. This ruling is expected to make fruit pulp and juice-based carbonated beverages more affordable while providing financial relief to beverage manufacturers burdened by high taxes.

### **Karnataka FDA begins drive to inspect ice cream and soft drink manufacturing units**

**K**arnataka Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has commenced the inspection of ice cream and soft drink manufacturing units. This move comes in view of the summers setting in and increasing the demand for frozen desserts and fruits drinks.

The investigation aims to identify shops that follow unhygienic storage practices, use of excessive artificial essence, harmful essence, poor quality water colours and substandard raw ingredients in their products. The inspectors went on to identify shops that engage in unhygienic storage practices. Their onus was to detect the use of excessive or harmful artificial essences and low-quality raw ingredients. In addition, they had the responsibility to examine the quality and safety of materials used in products.

During the inspections, 475 outlets were checked and 174 were found violating hygiene standards. Notices were issued for failing to maintain cleanliness including food storage in hygienic conditions. Even kitchens were unclean and infested with pests. FDA imposed Rs 62,000 fine with additional penalties yet to be levied based on further inspections.

We are particularly focusing on local manufacturers engaged in the production of ice creams and beverages to ensure they are adhering to appropriate safety standards. Our team visited units of the local prepared ice cream and soft drinks to ascertain the hygiene violations and adulteration if any. Such surprise drives will continue as ice cream can be contaminated in several ways. These include contaminated and low quality water, harmful synthetic colours and essence to enhance the flavour of the final products, stated a source in Karnataka FDA.

Some manufacturers also use substandard milk and fats instead of dairy products compromising safety. Proper storage such as improper freezing or exposure to pests further increases the health risks. Since children consume these products the most, ensuring strict quality checks is essential to prevent foodborne diseases, the official added.



## New Launches

### Protinex unveils sachets to make daily protein intake accessible



**P**rotinex, the flagship brand of Danone India has launched its new sachet range to make protein intake more accessible for consumers in India. This initiative aims to bridge the protein gap in India by offering high-quality nutrition in an economical and easy-to-consume format.

India is grappling with a significant protein deficiency, with studies revealing that nearly 73% of adult Indian diets are deficient in protein. Moreover, access to protein-rich nutrition remains limited due to affordability and availability concerns. Protein is an essential building block of life and must be consumed daily, as it is not stored in the body like other nutrients. It plays a vital role in supporting the body's ongoing repair and maintenance processes, promoting sustained energy levels and strength throughout the day. Recognising this gap, it has introduced easy-to-consume sachets that offer a cost-effective solution for individuals looking to incorporate protein into their daily diet.

Designed to complement modern, on-the-go lifestyles, it is democratising protein making it accessible to millions of Indians in an affordable and convenient format. These sachets cater to working professionals, students, and homemakers seeking a simple yet nutritious dietary solution. It is easily dissolvable in milk or water, and offer a seamless and hassle-free way to incorporate essential nutrients into daily routines.

Sriram Padmanabhan, marketing director of Danone India, said, "Protein deficiency remains a pressing concern in India. At Protinex, we recognise the urgent need to bridge this nutritional gap with accessible and effective solutions. With the introduction of Protinex sachets, we are taking a step forward in making high-quality protein intake more convenient for individuals, thereby supporting India's journey towards better health and nutrition."

### Nestlé India unveils new CEREGROW variant with no refined sugar

**N**estlé India has announced the launch of new CEREGROW with no refined sugar, reinforcing its commitment to offering nutritious choices to its consumers through meaningful innovations. Designed for toddlers aged 2 to 6 years, CEREGROW multigrain cereal with the goodness of wheat, rice, oats, milk, and fruits.

Additionally, CEREGROW is a source of 19 key nutrients including nutrients which support normal bone (calcium & vitamin D) and muscle growth (protein) in children. Each bowl of CEREGROW provides over 30% RDA of essential nutrients like protein, calcium, iron, zinc, vitamin A and vitamin C. The new formulation also includes Alpha-linolenic acid (Omega-3) to help support normal Brain development.



Mr. Vineet Singh, Head, Nestlé Nutrition, India, said, at Nestlé India, we are committed to continuously harness the power of our research and development to drive innovation and create quality products that can be trusted. The introduction of new CEREGROW is another step towards this commitment and as part of our journey in reducing and eliminating sucrose from all our products meant for babies and young children. Nestlé India continues to provide quality nutrition, ensuring that every pack of CEREGROW undergoes multiple quality checks before reaching consumers to ensure that it is safe for consumption.

### Snickers Introduces New Peanut Brownie Flavor to Satisfy Chocolate Lovers



**M**ars Wrigley India has unveiled its latest addition to the Snickers lineup — the Snickers Peanut Brownie. This new variant combines the rich taste of a brownie with Snickers' signature caramel, peanuts, and chocolate blend, aiming to attract both loyal fans and new chocolate enthusiasts.

Snickers has always been the OG hunger satisfier, and with the Peanut Brownie, we're elevating that experience to a whole new level, said Mr. Himanshu Gupta, Strategic Demand Manager, Mars Wrigley India. The company has also launched a new TV commercial conceptualized by DDB Mudra to promote the Peanut Brownie flavor. Continuing Snickers' iconic "You're not you when you're hungry" campaign, the ad humorously depicts a person transforming into a vacuum cleaner when hunger strikes, symbolizing the frantic search for food.

With this innovative flavor and engaging marketing campaign, Snickers aims to expand its appeal and reinforce its position as a trusted snack for indulgence and hunger relief.



## JK Foods launches 'Ghost Puffs' Fun Flips



**F**un Flips, the popular snack brand from JK Foods, is igniting a wave of bold flavor with the launch of its latest snack creation, Ghost Puffs. Infused with the potent heat of Bhut Jolokia, also known as Ghost Pepper—one of the hottest peppers in the world—these spicy, crunchy puffs promise to deliver an unforgettable snacking experience for those who dare to take on extreme flavors. A unique combination of flavor and heat

Ghost Puffs are crafted with the finest ingredients and packed with the flavor intensity of Bhut Jolokia, balanced perfectly with the satisfying crunch of corn. The product promises not only an intense heat but a delightful aftertaste that lingers long after the snack is finished.

Whether you're a spice connoisseur or just looking to step up your snack game, Ghost Puffs offer an experience that's as unforgettable as it is delicious. Ghost Puffs are designed to challenge even the most seasoned spice lovers. With a unique flavor that's both intense and addictive, these puffs go beyond traditional snacks, offering an adventure for the taste buds

that's sure to excite and surprise.

Ghost Puffs are not just another snack – they're an immersive, bold experience for anyone who loves to explore intense flavors, says Mr. Chaitanya Singhania, Director, JK Foods. We have reimagined the classic puff, infusing it with Bhut Jolokia to create something entirely new for our consumers. For spice enthusiasts, this is the next level – a snack that promises an intense, thrilling ride for the senses.

The product will be available for purchase across quick commerce platforms and retail stores in the following cities during the first phase of the launch: Chandigarh, Delhi, NCR, Bengaluru, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Chennai, Lucknow, and Hyderabad. Fans of the bold and the spicy can easily access Ghost Puffs from their favorite online retailers and local stores.

With Ghost Puffs, Fun Flips continues to push the limits of snacking, delivering bold and thrilling flavors that excite with every bite. A perfect snack for the boldest trendsetters, Ghost Puffs are ready to set the snacking world on fire.

## Mother Dairy forays into protein-rich offerings with all new portfolio

**M**other Dairy, India's leading milk and milk products major, announced its foray into protein centred offerings with the launch of its all new 'Pro' range of products – starting with Promilk, a one-of-its-kind high-protein milk.

The company's new foray stems from its deep understanding of consumers, with a focus on offering protein-rich products that easily fit in the daily routines, taste right, and do not require any behaviour change.



The range will gradually be strengthened with a diverse range of protein-rich daily dairy staples including paneer and curd (pouch & set curd).

Mr. Manish Bandlish, Managing Director, Mother Dairy, said, in today's fast-paced world, maintaining a well-balanced diet is more vital than ever, with protein serving as a cornerstone of overall health. However, studies indicate that 70-80% of Indians do not meet their daily protein requirements, despite protein being available in varied forms and formats. In fact, for many, increasing protein intake often requires the effort of adopting new habits or behaviours.

At Mother Dairy, we embraced this challenge by designing a Pro range of products for everyday solution that seamlessly fits into one's routine without requiring any behavioural changes. This launch marks a significant step for us towards democratising protein consumption and fostering a healthier future for all.

The newly introduced poly pack milk variant under the Pro range is specially developed for daily consumption by all age groups, offering 30% more protein and meeting a significant portion of their daily protein needs. Mother Dairy Promilk effortlessly integrates into daily routines, boosting protein intake without altering habits.

As we strive to strengthen our protein-based portfolio, we will soon be introducing a diverse range of protein-rich dairy products, including paneer, curd, and more, for the consumers, he said

### Centre withdraws 20% duty on onion export effective from April 1st, 2025



The Government of India has withdrawn 20% duty on onion export, effective from 1 April 2025. A notification to this effect was issued by the Department of Revenue today on the communication of Department of Consumer Affairs.

To ensure domestic availability, the government had taken measures to check export by means of duty, minimum export price (MEP) and even to the extent of export prohibition for almost five months, from 8 December 2023 till 3 May 2024. The export duty of 20% which now stands removed has been in place from 13 September 2024.

Despite export restriction, the total onion export during FY 2023-24 was 17.17 LMT and FY 2024-25 (till 18 March) was 11.65 LMT. Monthly onion export quantity had picked up from 0.72 LMT in September 2024 to 1.85 LMT in January, 2025.

The decision stands as another testament to the government's commitment to ensuring remunerative prices to farmers while maintaining affordability of onion to the consumers at this crucial juncture when both mandi and retail prices have softened following expected arrival of rabi crops in good quantities. Even though, the current mandi prices are above the level during corresponding period of previous years, a decline of 39% is observed in the all-India weighted average modal prices. Similarly, all-India average retail prices recorded declined of 10% over the past one month.

Onion arrival in benchmark markets Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon have increased from this month which drive prices downward. The modal prices in Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon on 21 March, 2025 were Rs. 1330/qlt and Rs. 1325/qlt, respectively.

As per the estimates of Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, rabi production this year at 227 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) is over 18% higher than 192 LMT last year. The rabi onion which accounted for 70-75% of India's total onion production is crucial for overall availability and stability in prices till the arrival of kharif crop from October/November onward. The estimated higher production this season is expected to further ease the market prices in coming months.

The emerging production and prices scenario came as welcome breather for the country which had to grapple with the twin issues of lower domestic production and high international prices from August, 2023.

### Govt. to Set Up 100 NABL-Accredited Food Testing Labs by 2025-26 to Boost Food Safety

Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu announced that the Ministry of Food Processing Industries will provide financial support for establishing 100 NABL-accredited food testing laboratories across India by the financial year 2025-26. This initiative, part of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY), aims to enhance food safety standards and support agricultural producers.



Speaking at the inauguration of a food testing lab at Maharaja Ranjit Singh Punjab Technical University in Bathinda, Bittu underscored the importance of such facilities in ensuring food products meet safety benchmarks and are free from contaminants and pathogens.

The PMKSY scheme has earmarked Rs. 503.47 crore for 205 food testing lab projects. Of these, 169 projects have been completed, with Rs. 349.21 crore disbursed so far. The upcoming labs will cater to regulatory bodies such as the FSSAI, Export Inspection Council (EIC), and APEDA, while also aligning with international standards like those set by the USFDA and EU regulations.

Farmers and producers involved in key sectors like citrus fruits, green peas, cauliflower, milk products, basmati rice, wheat, and oilseeds are expected to benefit significantly. The improved quality assurance mechanisms are set to enhance exports, increase farmers' incomes, and create technical job opportunities.

Highlighting Punjab's growth in food processing, Bittu revealed that the ministry has sanctioned 24 cold chain projects worth Rs 553 crore, three agro-processing clusters valued at Rs. 70 crore, 16 food processing units involving Rs 432 crore investment, and 10 food testing labs costing Rs. 48 crore.

In total, Punjab has received approval for 61 projects under PMKSY, amounting to Rs. 1,557 crore, with Rs. 419 crore allocated as grants.



## Govt. Disburses Rs. 474 Crore to Boost Food Processing Sector under PLI Scheme



The government has disbursed Rs. 474 crores under the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to support the food processing industry for the financial year 2022-23. For the ongoing financial year 2023-24, the disbursement target of Rs. 700 crore is on track to be achieved, according to an official statement.

Currently, 171 active beneficiaries are availing incentives across various categories in the food processing sector under the scheme, while six firms have withdrawn their applications.

The PLI scheme aims to attract investments in key manufacturing sectors, boost efficiency, and ensure Indian food processing companies remain competitive on a global scale. The initiative is part of the government's broader plan to enhance domestic manufacturing and promote high-quality food production.

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