

## **Frequently asked questions:**

### **3.1. Why the Food Laws and Regulations are necessary?**

Food being the basic need of humans and other living animal, organisms, food is taken by everybody and everyday. The quality measurement of the food products calls for food product evaluation in terms of the contents, processing, effect, packaging used, etc. therefore, in order to have quality evaluation of food products and to safeguard the interests of the consumers, Food Laws and Regulations are necessary and each country has their own regulations based on their agricultural practices, product manufacture and distribution.

### **3.2. What is covered under food laws and regulations?**

Food laws and Regulations provide a broad coverage to the safety and quality of the food products. In specific, it covers the agricultural produce, processed foods, packaged foods, labeling of foods, certification of food industries, import – export policies. It covers the composition of products and analytical methods of food analysis. Food adulteration and the clause of punishments is also a part of laws. Over the years, food management systems have been introduced for bringing out better quality food industries. It also provides protection to consumers in terms of consumer protection act.

### 3.3 Which are the National Food Laws Regulatory Systems?

In India, National Laws and regulatory systems fall into two categories. Compulsory legislations are government based, formulated by various ministries such as Ministry of Food, Health and Family Welfare, Civil Supplies, Food and Consumer Affairs, Agriculture, Commerce, Weights and Measures, Agricultural Directorate of Marketing and Inspection etc. under this, the major law which protects common consumers against impure, unsafe and fraudulently labeled foods is PFA, 1954. Then followed are Essential Commodities Act, 1954, Standards for weights and Measures Act, 1976, Fruits Product order, 1955, Milk and Milk Products order, 1966, The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, Export Act, 1963 etc. Voluntary standards comprise of Agricultural Produce Grading and Marking Act, 1937 (AGMARK), Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Act, 1985, Cess Act, 1985 and Bureau of Indian Standards, 1956 which deals with the agricultural produce, processed foods quality and safety and these get reviewed and amended periodically. Now, in order to have comprehensive legislation and Integrated Food Law, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has started compiling all the above Acts and working on the food standards. The first comprehensive Act was released called “The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

### 3.4.What is Food Labeling?

Labeling is an integral part of packaged food system. Food labeling gives the information on food name, batch of manufacture, date of manufacture, shelf life/expiry date, list of ingredients used in the product manufacture in the descending order of their composition, flavours/additives/colour declaration and animal/plant food mark. In the recent years, the nutritional labeling has been practiced which provides the nutrients composition as well as the strength of the product in terms of minor nutrients such as vitamins, calcium etc, and health supporting components such as dietary fibre, cholesterol, polyunsaturated fatty acids etc. thus, food labeling gives a clear picture on the product.

### 3.5. What is FSSA and its importance?

FSSA is the comprehensive integrated Food Law which has been called as Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The main objective is to bring a single legislation relating to food and to support for a systematic and scientific development of food processing industries. This act covers the salient features of PFA Act, 1954 along with international legislations and comparative Codex standards related to food safety norms so that it meets the requirements of both domestic and export trade practices.

### 3.6. How the food exports are managed?

The food commodities prior to exporting will be inspected for quality concerning to the Export Act, 1963 and it will be carried out by AGMARK. Subsequently, products are sent for clearance. However, the acceptance of the consignment will be based on the specifications laid down by the receiving country.

### 3.7. What is the importance of ASC specifications?

Army Service Corps (ASC) specifications is a specified mission for quality control of foods in Defence Procurement Directorate General of Supplies and Transport (DGST) in the authority for procurement of foods for Army Personnel and complying with ASC specifications is a must. The food requirements with long shelf life and long distance transports under varied environmental conditions demands a little deviated and stringent specifications as compared to other statutory bodies working in the country. The quality awareness and cost effectiveness are given equal priorities in judging and procurement of the products. A little deviated needs of the Army, Navy and Air Force services, because of transport and storage of terrain conditions of high altitudes, deserts, humid zones, etc., specific specifications has been drawn for the commodities concerned.

### 3.8. Give a brief on PFA Act.

Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act, 1954 is the major law which protects the common consumers against impure, unsafe and fraudulently labeled foods. PFA Act came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1955. Later, the four amendments of PFA Act during 1964, 1971, 1976 and 1986 were made maintaining the basic norms. The provisions of this act are mandatory and satisfy minimum quality, ensuring safety for consumption of foods. PFA Act also covered the list of additives i.e., preservatives, antioxidants, anticaking agents, antifoaming agents, flavouring agents, buffering agents, sequestering agents, irradiation dosages, metal contaminants etc., and their permitted levels of various products.

### 3.9. Give a brief note on BIS.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) 1956 is the voluntary organization dealing with the food standards mainly refers to quality and safety of products and ensures quality through certification system. The organization has brought out the specifications on various aspects of foods and are as follows.

- i. Product specifications - raw materials and final products
- ii. Glossary of terms of certain materials for industrial use
- iii. Hygienic codes applicable to most of the food industries
- iv. Microbiological methods specifications
- v. Sensory evaluation method

- vi. Grading standards for cereals and vegetable oils
- vii. Methodologies booklets
- viii. Packaging materials specifications
- ix. Specifications for food additives
- x. Labeling and advertising specifications

3.10. Give a brief on AGMARK.

The second, voluntary organization is the Agricultural Produce Grading and Marking Act (AGMARK), 1937 which comprises the rules for grading and marking of all the agricultural products covering cereals, pulses and their products, fruits, vegetables, spices, oils and fats and a few miscellaneous items. The modality of specifications drawn is based on

- i. Commodity and their grades on quality
- ii. Special as well as general characteristics of the commodity
- iii. Based on size and weight of the commodity
- iv. Based on the features of the commodity
- v. Based on the soundness of the commodity

3.11. How does the international level operates?

Two organizations i.e. International Standards Organization (ISO) and Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) are working at the international level. BIS is the liaisoning body for ISO and Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is the liaisoning

authority for CAC. These organizations represent the international meetings and carry out the work on parallel platform. FSSAI is planning to harmonise the National specifications with international codex specifications for better global trade practices.

### 3.12. What are the main functions of FSSAI?

The main functions of FSSAI are

- a)** Issue of Licence to Food Industries after Inspection.
- b)** Permission for the use of food additives for specific products.
- c)** Constituting the various scientific panels and conduct of meetings regularly.
- d)** Publication of manuals of Methods of Sampling and Analysis.
- e)** Reacting to the public food problems and necessary support.

### 3.13. What is ISO?

ISO is an International Standards Organisation run under FDA. All the countries will have a membership and periodical meetings will be held. This helps in harmonization of all the activities of food laws and regulations so that globally, the the food products quality can be better managed.

### 3.14. Who is responsible for certification?

BIS is the certifying authority for the products. Over the years, the mandatory regulations have also encompassed the compliance of the procedures to meet the standards which is a preventive action for the successful achievement. In 1990's, BIS has introduced the Quality Management Systems (QMS). In the beginning, the guidelines for Accreditation of Laboratories, Inspection Bodies, Certification Bodies and Systems of Certification were released.

### 3.15. What is ISO quality management system?

ISO Quality Management Systems (ISO 9000 series) which clearly states the hygiene requirements, performance improvements, quality plans, management of projects, documentation, training, utilization of services of consultants, auditing and certification. The compliance of ISO 9000 series with BIS 14000 series has brought out better clarity in understanding and adopting the procedures. The BIS-14000 series standards refer to the industry management in terms of hygiene, safety, quality control with documentation as the emphasized feature. Many of the industries, research laboratories are streamlining, systematizing in their work action profile through the



system of ISO 9000:2001 a generic certification and the recent upgradation to ISO 9000:2008 certification has further improved the procedures and documentation.