Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Transparent food labelling is an important instrument of consumer protection and preventive public health. Examine the role of FSSAI in strengthening food-label transparency in India. What measures are required to address misleading claims and improve consumer awareness?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Food safety, FSSAI, consumer rights, nutritional information, front-of-pack labelling, misleading advertisements, public health, regulatory enforcement

Model Answer

Introduction

Food labelling enables consumers to understand the nutritional composition, ingredients and potential health risks of packaged products. In India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) plays a central role in regulating food standards and promoting informed consumer choices.

Importance of Transparent Food Labelling

1. **Informed consumer choice:** Clear disclosure of sugar, salt, fats, ingredients and allergens helps consumers compare products and make informed dietary decisions.

2. **Preventive healthcare:** Accessible nutritional information can encourage healthier food choices and support efforts to address diet-related non-communicable diseases.

3. **Consumer protection:** Accurate labelling reduces the possibility of consumers being misled by exaggerated nutritional or health-related claims.

4. **Protection of vulnerable groups:** Allergen declarations and clear ingredient information are particularly important for children and individuals with food sensitivities.

5. **Corporate accountability:** Transparent disclosures encourage food companies to improve product composition and responsible marketing practices.

Role of FSSAI

1. **Regulatory standards:** FSSAI prescribes food safety and labelling requirements under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

2. **Nutritional disclosure:** It regulates mandatory information on ingredients, nutrition, allergens and other relevant product details.

3. **Monitoring and enforcement:** Inspection, testing and action against non-compliant products help improve regulatory compliance.

4. **Consumer awareness:** Public information campaigns can improve understanding of nutritional labels and food safety.

Way Forward

1. Develop scientifically validated and easily understandable front-of-pack labelling standards.

2. Strengthen monitoring of misleading health claims and deceptive food advertisements.

3. Improve enforcement capacity and penalties for repeated violations.

4. Encourage independent product testing and transparent industry disclosures.

5. Promote nutrition literacy through schools and public health campaigns.

Conclusion

Transparent food labelling connects consumer rights with preventive healthcare. Strong regulation, responsible corporate practices and public awareness are essential for building a safer and more accountable food system in India.

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