



## JSA Newsletter Food and Consumer

March 2026

India's food and consumer protection sector continued to be shaped by regulatory strengthening and stricter oversight by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India ("FSSAI"). In the [48<sup>th</sup> meeting](#) of the food authority<sup>1</sup>, a policy was decided regarding the timeline for compliance with the amendments relating to the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations and labelling changes in other Food Safety and Standards regulations, which would come into force on July 1, 2026, with a minimum transition period of 365 (three hundred sixty-five) days from the date of notification to allow businesses adequate time to comply. Further, in emergency situations, implementation timelines may be determined on a case-by-case basis. This new order supersedes the earlier directive issued on January 3, 2025, following the 45<sup>th</sup> food authority meeting regarding timeline for compliance with the amendments to the labelling provisions.

Continuing with the aim of *Viksit Bharat* by 2047, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution ("MoCA"), *vide* press release dated January 13, 2026, organised a regional workshop on consumer protection for eastern states in Patna, Bihar, bringing together key stakeholders from Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha. The workshop highlighted key measures to strengthen the consumer grievance redressal system through digital transformation, faster case resolution, and improved enforcement of consumer commission orders. Additionally, the discussions covered agricultural price stability and pulses procurement to support farmers, while state officials highlighted the importance of digital governance and consumer rights in improving access to justice, particularly in rural regions.

Aligning with the vision of *atmanirbharta*, the Government, has undertaken reforms to support employment generation, agricultural productivity, household purchasing power and universal services to people. The [Budget 2026](#), significantly strengthens the food, agriculture, and consumer protection ecosystem through reforms aimed at enhancing farmer incomes, improving productivity, and modernising supply chains. Key initiatives include integrated development of fisheries infrastructure, expansion of animal husbandry enterprises through credit-linked subsidies, and targeted support for high-value crops such as coconut, cashew, cocoa, sandalwood, agarwood, almonds, walnuts, and pine nuts. Dedicated programs for coconut, cashew, and cocoa aim to boost domestic production, enhance value addition, and build globally competitive brands. The launch of Bharat-VISTAAR, an artificial intelligence multilingual advisory platform integrating AgriStack and Indian Council of Agricultural Research practices, will empower farmers with data-driven decision support, reduce risks, and improve farm-level outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

This edition of the JSA Foods and Consumer Newsletter highlights recent (January 2026 to February 2026) regulatory developments focused on consumer protection and the food businesses in India.

<sup>1</sup> Office order dated January 6, 2026

<sup>2</sup> Government of India, Budget 2026-27 dated February 1, 2026

## Direction regarding enforcement of the new standards for meat sausages

FSSAI, *vide* circular dated January 30, 2026<sup>3</sup>, has issued directions under Section 16(5) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 regarding the enforcement of new standards for meat sausages introduced through the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) First Amendment Regulations, 2025 (“**Regulations**”)<sup>4</sup>. The Regulations were scheduled to come into force on February 1, 2026. However, to give businesses additional time to adjust and comply with the updated regulations regarding meat sausages, the compliance deadline for implementing the new standards for meat sausages has been extended by 3 (three) months from February 1, 2026 (i.e., May 1, 2026).

For context, the sausage market in Asia-Pacific has been growing rapidly and, in particular, recent data shows that even in 2023 India had consumed 220,000 (two lakh twenty thousand) metric tonnes in consumption. In addition, India is unique inasmuch there is higher demand for poultry based and vegetarian sausages. Interestingly, the Regulations appear more focussed on “sausages and sausage meat containing raw meat, cereals and condiments”, compared to vegetarian sausages.

## Compliance with Food Safety and Standards (Recognition and Notification of the Laboratories) Regulations, 2018 by FSSAI recognised laboratories

To ensure compliance with Regulation 9 (*dealing with obligation of food laboratories*) of the Food Safety and Standards (Recognition and Notification of the Laboratories) Regulations, 2018, all FSSAI notified laboratories are directed<sup>5</sup> to:

1. upload test reports of all food samples analysed by them on the InFoLNet portal without delay and maintain their InFoLNet profiles updated and accurate on a real-time basis;
2. strictly adhere to validated and prescribed test methods as specified under the respective food safety and standards rules and regulations and within the scope of accreditation granted by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL); and
3. comply with the prescribed test report format as stipulated under the respective food safety and standards rules and regulations without any deviation.

## Mandatory levy of service charge by restaurants violates consumer law

To check and eliminate forced service charges or other violations of the consumer protection rules the Central Consumer Protection Authority (“**CCPA**”) *vide* press release dated January 10, 2026<sup>6</sup>, has taken *suo motu* cognisance against 27 (twenty-seven) restaurants across India for violating consumer rights and adoption of unfair trade practices under Section 2(47) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, (*relating to the mandatory levy of service charge*). Pursuant to the Delhi High Court judgment on March 28, 2025, which upheld CCPA’s 2022 guidelines stating, *inter alia*, that restaurants cannot impose service charges automatically or by default and customers must be clearly informed that it is voluntary and optional. According to the guidelines restaurants cannot collect service charge under another name, force customers to pay it, deny service if it is refused, and add Goods and Services Tax on it. Subsequently, CCPA ordered refunds to customers and imposed penalties.

For a detailed analysis, of the Delhi High Court judgment on March 28, 2025, please refer to the [JSA Prism of April 11, 2025](#).

<sup>3</sup> FSSAI circular dated January 30, 2026

<sup>4</sup> Notified on July 10, 2025

<sup>5</sup> FSSAI circular dated February 12, 2026

<sup>6</sup> MoCA press release dated January 10, 2026

## Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Amendment Rules, 2026

MoCA, *vide* notification dated February 13, 2026, has amended the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011, by inserting new sub-rule 6 (10A) under Rule 6 (*declarations to be made on every package*). Subsequently, every e-commerce entity selling imported products must provide the product listings of the products in a searchable and sortable filter specifying the country of origin.<sup>7</sup>

## Tamil Nadu's New Warehousing policy

The Tamil Nadu Warehousing Policy 2026 (“**WP 2026**”) along with the Tamil Nadu Circular Economy Investment Policy 2026 were released on January 13, 2026. In addition to Agriculture sector, it covers incentives for sectors such as technology, healthcare and engineering as well.

With respect to agriculture, there are non-fiscal as well as fiscal incentives. Agriculture warehouses meeting the relevant built-up criteria and storing food grains (including rice and wheat), pulses, millets, vegetables, fruits and flowers would be eligible for:

1. **Non-fiscal incentives:** grant of industry status, single window clearance coverage, inclusion in ‘white category’ industry under the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, and land reservation benefit.
2. **Fiscal incentives:** All eligible warehouses can avail a 25% subsidy of the cost of undertaking green initiatives, capped at INR 2,00,00,000 (Indian Rupees two crore). Eligible new warehouses can also avail a 50% subsidy on the cost incurred to train warehouse employees, capped at INR 10,000 (Indian Rupees ten thousand) per employee. In addition, there are fixed capital subsidy, land cost incentive, stamp duty exemption and electricity tax exemption.
3. **Special incentive for agri-sector:** A subsidy available of up to 25% of the cost of undertaking sector specific technology initiatives, capped at INR 2,00,00,000 (Indian Rupees two crore). This includes automatic aeration and fumigation for pest control, specified temperature and humidity control mechanisms, automated bag stacking, raking and conveyor systems, and radio frequency identification based warehouse management for ‘first in first out’ outcomes.

## Indian Agri Sector and Free Trade Agreements<sup>8</sup>

As per the publicly available information, the India and European Union (“**EU**”) Free Trade Agreement (“**FTA**”) and the India – United States (“**US**”) Trade Agreement significantly reduce or eliminate tariffs on of the goods that are traded, making it easier and cheaper for products to move between India and the major global markets. The India–EU FTA will make it much easier for Indian food and consumer products to enter European markets by removing or reducing tariffs on most goods, resulting in products such as tea, coffee, spices, fruits, vegetables, seafood, and processed foods from India to become cheaper and more competitive in the European market, helping Indian farmers, food companies, and micro, small, and medium enterprises to increase exports and incomes. Further, the agreements protect sensitive sectors like dairy and some agricultural products while simplifying trade rules and certification processes, making it easier for Indian businesses to sell in the global supply chains.

Further, the Indian consumers and retailers may witness affordable imported food and beverage products such as olive oil, chocolates, pasta, nuts, and processed foods from Europe and the US. This increases product variety and creates stronger competition for domestic food brands, pushing Indian companies to improve quality, packaging, and global standards. These FTAs aim to boost trade, expand consumer choices, and integrate India’s food and fast-moving consumer goods sectors more deeply into global supply chains.

<sup>7</sup> MoCA notification dated February 13, 2026

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Commerce & Industry, press release dated January 27, 2026

As a corollary from a corporate standpoint, these developments that have been set in motion should spur increased cross-border transactions – investments, collaborations and joint ventures, acquisitions, as well as commercial partnerships.

## Food and Consumer Sector

The food and consumer practice at JSA has vast expertise across the entire value chain, offering guidance on all aspects of operations, from farm to table (for food and beverages), and origin to end use (for consumer space). Our work in this sector covers a wide range of areas, including both domestic and international investments, mergers and acquisitions, initial public offerings, joint ventures, litigation, corporate matters, real estate issues, and technology licensing, among others.

We advise a diverse range of industry participants, such as companies in food and beverage production, processing, and distribution, manufacturers of agrichemicals, agricultural commodity processors, producers of precision farming equipment, as well as banking and financial institutions.

With offices across India, our team delivers a seamless, comprehensive service to clients navigating the growing challenges in the food and beverages sector, such as increasingly complex regulatory requirements, supply chain issues, ESG concerns, and the enforcement and protection of trade secrets and other intellectual property.

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15 Practices and  
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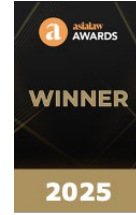
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