

NATIONAL

Come July, label mandatory for food certified as 'organic'

Grow healthy, eat healthy

A look at the status of organic farming, which is catching up in India

1.5 mh of cultivable land certified under National Programme for Organic Production in 2015-16

1.35 mt tonnes certified organic products are produced in India. A fifth of the total produce was exported

- 5,85,200 farmers were engaged in organic farming in 2015, more than any other country and a quarter of the world
- Only 1.7% of India's cultivated area is under organic farming



What is an organic product?
Fruits, vegetables, fibre and animal products sourced or grown in an environment free of chemical pesticide, fertilizers, genetically-modified organisms and induced hormones

How can you identify an organic product?
There are special logos on packaging of foods that are used to identify foods as organic. The FSSAI had recently introduced 'Jiavik Bharat' logo



mh: MILLION hectare, mt: MILLION tonne

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NEW DELHI, JANUARY 05, 2018 21:59 IST
 UPDATED: JANUARY 05, 2018 22:00 IST

Companies not sticking to standards can be prosecuted, according to FSSAI

Come July, it would be illegal to sell organic **food** that was not appropriately labelled so.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had issued regulations that required food companies selling organic produce to get certified with one of the two authorities – National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) or the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India). Companies could also get a voluntary logo from the FSSAI that marked its produce as 'organic.'

Though NPOP and PGS-India had been in the certification business for some years, it was mostly a voluntary exercise. "From July, any company that claims to sell organic food and not sticking to standards can be prosecuted," Pawan Aggrawal, CEO, FSSAI told *The Hindu*.

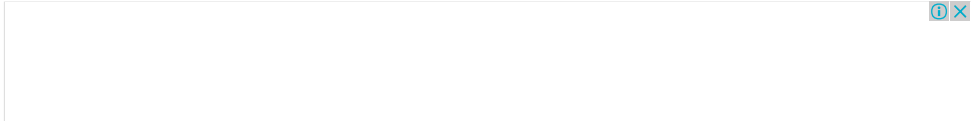
"..Labelling on the package of organic food shall convey full and accurate information on the organic status of the product. Such product may carry a certification or quality assurance mark of one of the systems mentioned... in addition to the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India's organic logo," said a FSSAI notification on January 2 and published in the Gazette. These rules were finalised after almost a year of being sent out as a draft for public comments.

Third party certification

For nearly two decades now, organic farming certification had been done through a process of third party certification under the NPOP. It was run by the Ministry of Commerce and was used for certifying general exports. Nearly 24 agencies were

authorised by the NPOP to verify farms, storages and processing units and successful ones got a special 'India Organic' logo.

The PGS-India programme, in contrast, had been around for only two years and – unlike the top-down approach of the NPOP – involves a peer-review approach. Here, farmers played a role in certifying whether the farms in their vicinity adhered to organic-cultivation practices. This programme was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture through the National Centre of Organic Farming.



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Printable version | Jan 8, 2018 9:04:17 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/label-mandatory-for-food-certified-as-organic-from-july/article22378459.ece>

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