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Packaged Foods Breach Salt and Fat Limits

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Why in News

According to a recent analysis by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)**, an array of packaged snacks and fast foods breach safe limits of salt and fat content.

CSE relied on the concept of the **Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)** to calculate the safety limits.

Recommended Dietary Allowance

- RDA is a **daily ceiling** on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrates and trans fats.
- It is **based on scientific consensus** and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the **World Health Organisation** and the **National Institute of Nutrition in India**.
- According to RDA, ideally an adult should not consume more than **5 gm of salt, 60 gm of fat, 300 gm carbohydrate and 2.2 gm of trans fat** on every day basis.

Centre for Science and Environment

- It is a **public interest research and advocacy organisation** based in **New Delhi**. CSE researches into, lobbies for and communicates the urgency of development that is both sustainable and equitable.
- It was established in 1980.

Key Points

- CSE analysed samples were collected from grocery stores and fast food outlets in the city.
- It found out that given the size of servings and the amount of nutrients per 100 gm, a single packet of packaged item had **more salts and fats than the recommended limits**.

- In 2019, **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** proposed **draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations**, which require packaged food companies to declare nutritional information such as calories (energy), saturated fat, trans-fat, added sugar and sodium per serve on the front of the pack.
 - The food labels also need to declare, per serve percentage contribution to RDA on the front of the pack.
 - Though these regulations are under discussions since 2015 and several drafts have come out on them, they have yet to become law, and to be operationalised.
- The CSE concluded that all of the popular snacks and fast foods should display a **‘Red Octagon’** on the front of the pack.
 - **Red Octagon** is a warning symbol employed in packaged foods in **Chile and Peru**. It has a number and the name of the food component within that indicates how widely off the RDA a particular ingredient is.
 - For example a Red “3.1 Salt” on a pack of potato chip, indicates that the salt it contains is 3.1 times the RDA for snacks.
- The **food industry is opposing** the move because all of the packaged food which was tested would come under the red mark.

The regulations, as of now, don’t apply to fast foods such as burgers and pizzas, even though they were included in the CSE analysis.

Source: TH