



BANKING AND FINANCE

# ISO vs AOAC vs BIS: How the Latest FSSAI Amendment Will Speed Up Food Imports

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India's food-import clearance process is poised to become both faster and more science-agnostic. On 27 October 2025 the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India released the Food Safety and Standards (Import) First Amendment Regulations, 2025, a significant update to the 2017 import regime. The notification, made under section 92 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, culminates a year-long consultative exercise that began when the draft amendment was floated in the Gazette of 3 October 2024. After the mandatory sixty-day objection window closed on 7 December 2024, FSSAI sifted through industry comments, secured Central Government approval and finalised the text now published as Extraordinary Gazette No. 690.

The most eye-catching change is the effective date: 1 May 2026. The six-month runway gives every customs-notified laboratory, referral lab and importer time to update their standard operating procedures and train staff before the new discipline kicks in.

Regulation 10(4)(b) used to insist that labs follow only the analytical manuals issued by FSSAI. The revised clause keeps those manuals as the first port of call but adds a pragmatic escape hatch. If a testing parameter is not covered, laboratories may now adopt any internationally accepted, validated method—AOAC, ISO, Pearson's, Jacob, IUPAC, FAO/WHO Codex, BIS, Codex Alimentarius, Woodmen, Winton-Winton, Joslyn or any other globally recognised protocol. The shift ends the earlier regulatory vacuum that forced labs to either decline a test or seek case-by-case dispensations, often delaying consignments for weeks.

Equally important is the new sub-regulation 10(5). Until now there was no statutory timeline for releasing analytical reports. From May next year every notified or referral laboratory must issue its findings in Form-2 within five calendar days of receiving the sample, and the report must carry the signature of the designated Food Analyst or the Director of the lab. The combined effect is expected to compress the current average clearance window and reduce demurrage costs for importers.

Taken together, the two tweaks modernise India's food-safety architecture without diluting standards. By embracing globally proven test methods and imposing a strict five-day turnaround, FSSAI has balanced scientific rigour with trade facilitation—an equilibrium that should please both consumer advocates and stakeholders managing chilled supply chains.

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