



FOOD

No Inspector? No Problem, Meet the FSSAI App That Lets Customers Police the Kitchen

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On 25 July 2025 the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has issued an advisory that requires every restaurant, café, dhaba and cloud kitchen that the familiar framed licence hanging near the cash counter must now be moved to a place where any customer can point a phone camera and, within seconds, summon the state.

The change is anchored in the Licensing Regulations, the provision that has always required food businesses to display their licence prominently. The new reading of the word “prominently” is what matters: it now means visibly and scannably. The first page of every FSSAI licence already carries a small black-and-white QR code. That code is the doorway to the Food Safety Connect mobile application, and the law wants it within arm’s reach of every diner.

Food Safety Connect is no passive brochure. Once the code is scanned, the app opens, auto-fills the licence number and jurisdictional details, and lets the user upload photographs, videos or text. A single tap sends the complaint to the Designated Officer whose territory the premises falls under. There are no clerks to misroute the mail, no forgotten emails. The same app also lets consumers verify that the licence on the wall is genuine, report exaggerated “organic” claims on the menu, or receive instant alerts when a batch of noodles is recalled.

Restaurants worried about extra paperwork can relax. The licence they already possess is the only document involved; they simply need to ensure the frame is placed so a waiting customer can scan it without having to ask. Digital businesses need only paste the same code or its short link on the landing page of their ordering platform or website. No new signboards, no laminated addendums, no weekly filings.

Behind the apparent simplicity lies a deliberate shift in regulatory philosophy. Compliance used to begin when the inspector walked in; now it can begin while the chef is still plating the biryani. The act of scanning is also an act of education. Customers learn that licences are real, traceable and revocable. Owners learn that transparency can be a marketing asset. Early adopters report that patrons spend a few extra seconds reading the licence details and tip more generously when they see the establishment is proud of its credentials.

The advisory ends with polite language (“encourages,” “requests”) but the legal scaffolding is unmistakable. Failure to display the licence in customer-visible form was already punishable under the FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011; the advisory merely clarifies that an obscured or half-torn certificate no longer suffices. The choice is not whether to comply but how gracefully to do so.

Street-food carts, five-star banquet halls and midnight-delivery kitchens now share a common square inch of wall space. The framed licence beside the counter is no longer bureaucratic wallpaper; it is a portal through which a lone complaint can travel, within seconds, from a handheld screen to the officer who can act on it. The advisory of 25 July 2025 may well be remembered as the day the customer finally joined the inspection team.

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