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FOOD

FSSAI Crack-Down on Auramine-Laced Roasted Chana: Industrial Dye in Food Meets Statutory Enforcement

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Introduction

On 28 November 2025 the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India invoked its emergency steering power under Section 16(5) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 to issue Order RCD-15001/16/2025-Regulatory. The directive responds to repeated intelligence that Auramine-O, an industrial dye reserved for leather and textiles, is being surreptitiously brushed onto roasted chana and similar cereal-based snacks to mimic the golden hue consumers associate with high-quality pulses. Because the colour is not listed in the Food Products Standards and Food Additives Regulations, 2011, its very presence classifies the snack as “unsafe” within the meaning of Section 3(1)(zz)(v) of the parent Act, triggering a mandatory enforcement cascade.

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Legal Foundation

The Order is anchored in the Authority’s statutory obligation to ensure that no article of food is manufactured, stored, distributed or sold in contravention of the standards. Section 16(5) clothes the Authority with power to give written directions to Commissioners of Food Safety and Central Licensing Authorities whenever adulteration or food-fraud is suspected on a pan-India scale. Auramine’s non-inclusion in the permitted colour schedule automatically places it in the category of extraneous and hazardous substances, attracting both penal sanctions and product recall obligations.

Scope of Enforcement

The direction is deliberately medium-agnostic: organised manufacturers, unorganised street-side roasters, e-commerce dark stores and last-mile delivery agents are all brought within the sweep. State and Union Territory food safety commissioners are instructed to draw statistically representative samples during surprise inspections, forward them only to National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited labs that carry Auramine within their cereal-product scope, and initiate adjudication proceedings the moment detection is confirmed. A consolidated Action-Taken Report, capturing licence numbers, brand names, test results and penalties imposed, must reach the Authority within fifteen calendar days, ensuring a real-time national risk map.

Laboratory Matrix

To obviate forum-shopping, the Order appends an exclusive panel of four accredited facilities (Shiva Analyticals (Bengaluru), National Commodities Management Services (Gurugram), Vimta Labs (Hyderabad) and Eureka Analytical Services (Bengaluru)) each validated for Auramine estimation in processed cereals. Any result emanating from a laboratory outside this roster is liable to be disregarded, insulating future prosecutions from evidentiary challenge.

Consequences of Violation

Beyond the immediate seizure and destruction of suspect stock, defaulting Food Business Operators face adjudicatory penalties that scale with the quantity adulterated and the gravity of risk posed. Repeat offenders risk imprisonment up to seven years plus corporate prosecution, while brand licences can be suspended indefinitely. The Order thus converts a colour preference into a compliance emergency.

Concluding Paragraph

By compressing laboratory science, field enforcement and penal deterrence into a single statutory instrument, FSSAI has signalled that industrial chemistry has no place on the nation's plate. Roasted chana may remain a popular snack, but its golden glow must henceforth derive only from the roasting kiln, not from the chemistry of leather dyes.

For further details write to contact@indialaw.in

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