



FOOD

REGULATORY

Mandatory Use of Corrosion-Resistant Knives and Blades in Food Businesses: An Analysis of the FSSAI Directive dated 15th June 2026

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), established as a statutory body under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, has consistently endeavoured to safeguard public health through the formulation and enforcement of rigorous food safety standards. In furtherance of this mandate, the FSSAI issued a significant advisory bearing file number F. No. [...]

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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), established as a statutory body under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, has consistently endeavoured to safeguard public health through the formulation and enforcement of rigorous food safety standards. In furtherance of this mandate, the FSSAI issued a significant advisory bearing file number F. No. RCD-15001/11/2021-Regulatory-FSSAI, dated the 15th day of June, 2026, addressing the critical issue of the use of food-grade and corrosion-resistant knives, blades, and other cutting equipment by food businesses. This advisory, emanating from the Regulatory Compliance Division of the FSSAI headquartered at FDA Bhawan, Kotla Road, New Delhi, is a timely reminder and a stringent directive to all Food Business Operators (FBOs) regarding their statutory obligations under the existing food safety framework. The present article seeks to analyse the legal background, regulatory context, operative directions, and enforcement mechanisms contained in this advisory, while articulating the broader implications for food safety governance in India.

The statutory foundation of the advisory is firmly rooted in Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, which prescribes exhaustive hygienic and sanitary requirements to be adhered to by all licensed and registered food business operators. Schedule 4 constitutes a cornerstone of India's food safety regulatory architecture, mandating that all equipment, utensils, and food-contact surfaces deployed in the course of food handling, preparation, processing, packaging, and storage must be constructed from food-grade, non-toxic, and corrosion-resistant materials. Furthermore, the said regulations impose an affirmative duty upon food business operators to maintain such equipment in a scrupulously hygienic condition, thereby ensuring the prevention of any form of contamination that may compromise the safety and wholesomeness of food intended for human consumption. The regulations additionally require that all equipment and utensils be subjected to adequate cleaning and disinfection protocols at appropriate intervals, thereby institutionalising a preventive approach to food safety management.

The genesis of the advisory lies in the FSSAI's growing concern regarding the widespread non-compliance observed within the food industry. It has been brought to the notice of the regulatory authority that a significant number of food business operators have been using knives, blades, and other cutting equipment that are manifestly unsuitable for food contact. The advisory specifically identifies the use of rusted, corroded, chipped, painted, damaged, or otherwise defective cutting instruments during critical food handling operations, including preparation, processing, cutting, slicing, and packaging. Such practices, though evidently contrary to the prescribed standards, have persisted in various segments of the food industry, prompting the FSSAI to issue a formal regulatory communication to arrest this hazardous trend and to reinforce compliance with the existing legal framework.

The advisory emphasises the grave public health risks attendant upon the use of substandard cutting equipment in food operations. The FSSAI has categorically stated that the deployment of rusted, corroded, chipped, painted, damaged, inadequately cleaned, or non-food-grade knives, blades, and cutting equipment may result in physical, chemical, and microbiological contamination of food products. Physical contamination may arise from the detachment of metal particles, paint flakes, or chipped fragments into the food matrix. Chemical contamination may be precipitated by the leaching of toxic substances from corroded or painted surfaces, particularly when such equipment comes into contact with acidic or moist food substrates. Microbiological contamination, perhaps the most insidious of the three, may occur because rusted and pitted surfaces provide ideal niches for the harbourage and proliferation of pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria and fungi, which may subsequently be transmitted to food items and, ultimately, to consumers. The advisory rightly emphasises that such practices are not merely regulatory violations but constitute a direct contravention of the sanitary and hygienic requirements prescribed under Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011.

In view of the foregoing concerns, the FSSAI has issued a series of mandatory directives to all food business operators, which are to be implemented with immediate effect and strict adherence. The first directive requires that only food-grade, corrosion-resistant knives, blades, and cutting equipment shall be used in any food handling and processing operation. This requirement ensures that all cutting instruments are fabricated from materials that are chemically stable, non-reactive, and safe for direct or indirect contact with food. The second directive mandates that all knives, blades, and cutting equipment in use must be maintained in a sound and hygienic condition at all times. Such equipment must be entirely free from rust, corrosion, chipping, paint, cracks, breakage, or any other defect that may potentially contaminate food. The third directive imposes an immediate obligation upon food business operators to remove from use and replace any cutting equipment that is rusted, corroded, chipped, damaged, or otherwise unsuitable for food contact. This directive operates as a proactive measure, eliminating the possibility of accidental or continued use of defective equipment. The fourth and final directive requires the establishment and maintenance of adequate cleaning, sanitisation, and sterilisation procedures, wherever applicable, for all knives, blades, and cutting equipment,

to be carried out at prescribed intervals. This directive reinforces the preventive sanitation philosophy that underpins the entire food safety regulatory regime.

The advisory also delineates the consequences of non-compliance and the enforcement architecture designed to secure adherence. Paragraph 6 of the advisory unequivocally states that any non-compliance observed shall attract action under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the regulations made thereunder. This provision invokes the penal and disciplinary mechanisms available under the parent statute, which include penalties, fines, and other corrective measures that may be imposed upon errant food business operators. Paragraph 7 of the advisory directs the Commissioners of Food Safety of all States and Union Territories, as well as the Regional Directors of the FSSAI, to issue appropriate instructions to the concerned Licensing Authorities and Food Safety Officers. These officers are enjoined to maintain strict vigilance during routine and surprise inspections, to ensure compliance with the advisory's provisions, and to initiate appropriate action in cases where non-compliance is detected. The advisory, therefore, imposes obligations upon the regulated entities and activates the regulatory machinery at the State and regional levels to monitor and enforce compliance.

The FSSAI advisory dated 15th June 2026, issued under file number F. No. RCD-15001/11/2021-Regulatory-FSSAI, constitutes a critical regulatory intervention aimed at eliminating the use of defective and non-food-grade cutting equipment in Indian food businesses. Grounded in the statutory requirements of Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, the advisory imposes clear, mandatory, and enforceable obligations upon food business operators to use only food-grade, corrosion-resistant knives, blades, and cutting equipment, to maintain such equipment in impeccable hygienic condition, to promptly remove and replace defective articles, and to implement rigorous cleaning and sterilisation protocols. The enforcement provisions, coupled with the directive to State and regional regulatory authorities to intensify inspectional vigilance, ensure that the advisory is not merely hortatory but possesses real regulatory teeth. For food business operators, compliance with this advisory is not optional but a statutory imperative, the disregard of which may attract penal consequences under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. This advisory is a testament to the FSSAI's unwavering commitment to ensuring that the food consumed by the Indian populace is safe, wholesome, and free from the hazards of physical, chemical, and microbiological contamination.

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