Misleading food claims: FSSAI issues notices to Nestle India and Hindustan Unilever

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News

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) announced on 17 Oct 2026 that it had served notices on two major companies. (1) Nestle India – 'Resource Renal Vanilla Flavour Powder' (for dietary management of chronic kidney disease): the prior approval required under the 2022 special-food regulations had not been obtained, and the mandatory veg/non-veg symbol was missing – a show-cause notice. (2) Hindustan Unilever (HUL) – claims on 'Horlicks Mother's Plus' ('for baby's healthy birth weight') and 'Horlicks Women's Plus' ('clinically proven to improve bone strength', 'No Added Sugar' though it contains maltodextrin) were found potentially misleading, and an explanation was sought. The same day the licence of 'Bala Ji Food Products' was cancelled for hygiene violations.

Key facts

Announced	17 Oct 2026 – FSSAI
Nestle product	Resource Renal – kidney-disease food; no prior approval, no veg/non-veg logo
HUL products	Horlicks Mother's Plus, Women's Plus – birth-weight, bone-strength, 'No Added Sugar' claims

Rules	FSS (Health Supplements, Nutraceuticals, FSDU, FSMP…) Regulations 2022; FSS (Advertising & Claims) Regulations 2018
Licence cancelled	Bala Ji Food Products – hygiene violations
FSSAI	FSS Act 2006; set up 2008; Health Ministry; HQ New Delhi

Background

- FSSAI: statutory body set up in 2008 under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006; under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; HQ New Delhi (FDA Bhawan, Kotla Road). The Act consolidated older laws including the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. The 'Eat Right India' movement was launched in 2018.
- Legal framework: FSS (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018 – food claims must be scientifically substantiated; words like 'natural', 'fresh', 'healthy' are restricted. Section 53 of the FSS Act – penalty up to ₹10 lakh for misleading advertisements. FSS (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020 – green dot for veg, brown dot for non-veg.
- Consumer protection: the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) was set up on 24 July 2020 under Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019; it issued Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in 2022. CCPA is under the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- Companies & science: Nestle – Switzerland (Vevey); Nestle India – Gurugram. HUL – Mumbai; parent Unilever (London); Horlicks came to HUL in 2020 through the merger of GSK Consumer Healthcare. Maltodextrin is a glucose polymer derived from starch; it is quickly broken down to glucose, which is why the 'No Added Sugar' claim was questioned.

Tamil Nadu link: the FSS Act is enforced in the State by the Tamil Nadu Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (Commissioner of Food Safety). As per Lok Sabha replies of 24 July 2026, Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of criminal convictions in the country – 2,865 from 2021–22 to 2025–26 – and topped food testing in 2025–26 with 44,603 samples.

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