FSSAI proposes new maximum residue limits for acetamiprid and imidacloprid pesticides in tea

Food Safety · 18 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/18



News

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) published the draft 'Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2026' in the Gazette of India on 16 Oct 2026. It proposes a maximum residue limit (MRL) of 20 mg/kg (20 ppm) for acetamiprid and 50 mg/kg (50 ppm) for imidacloprid in tea. The acetamiprid limit is lower than Japan's (30 ppm) and the USA's (50 ppm); the imidacloprid limit follows international Codex standards. Stakeholders have 60 days to comment; the limits are subject to finalisation.

Key facts

Draft	FSS (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2026 – Gazette, 16 Oct 2026
Acetamiprid	20 mg/kg (Japan 30, USA 50 ppm)
Imidacloprid	50 mg/kg – based on Codex standards
Comments	60 days from notification
Background	CIB&RC approved use on tea (Jan 2026); Tea Board added them to the Plant Protection Code (Apr 2026); small growers sought MRLs

Target pest	Tea mosquito bug (Helopeltis)

Background

- Science: acetamiprid and imidacloprid are 'neonicotinoid' insecticides – chemically similar to nicotine, they act on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors in the insect nervous system and paralyse it. They are systemic (spread inside the plant). They harm bees and other pollinators – so in 2018 the European Union banned outdoor use of imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam.
- Law: registration, manufacture and sale of pesticides – Insecticides Act, 1968; registering body – Central Insecticides Board & Registration Committee (CIB&RC), Ministry of Agriculture, Faridabad. Residue limits (MRLs) in food are fixed by FSSAI. The international standard-setter is the Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO–WHO, 1963).
- Economy: the Tea Board was set up under the Tea Act, 1953; HQ Kolkata; Ministry of Commerce and Industry. India is the world's second-largest tea producer after China; Assam leads. Darjeeling tea was India's first product to get a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Tamil Nadu link: the Nilgiris and Valparai (Coimbatore district) are major South Indian tea areas; 'Nilgiri (Orthodox)' tea has a GI tag. The United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI, 1893) is headquartered at Coonoor, and its Tea Research Institute (UPASI TRI) is at Valparai. The Tea Board has its South India office at Coonoor. The MRLs matter directly to the Nilgiris, home to many small tea growers.

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