

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



FSSAI Proposes Science-Based Pesticide Residue Limits for Tea, Reaffirming Commitment to Consumer Safety

FSSAI Notifies Draft Amendment Proposing Maximum Residue Limits for Acetamiprid and Imidacloprid in Tea; Invites Stakeholder Comments

India Proposes Acetamiprid Residue Limit of 20 ppm in Tea, Lower than Corresponding Limits of 30 ppm in Japan and 50 ppm in the USA

Earlier Regulatory Measures Included Delisting of 13 Pesticides with Higher Toxicity, Reflecting Continued Focus on Food Safety

India's Average Pesticide Use of Less Than 0.5 kg per Hectare Substantially Below Global Average of 2.38 kg per Hectare

Proposed Standards Seek to Balance Consumer Safety with Effective Pest Management and Sustainable Agricultural Practices

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 17 OCT 2026 3:26PM by PIB Delhi

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), as part of its ongoing efforts to promote science-based food safety regulation and consumer protection, has notified draft amendments proposing Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for two pesticides, Acetamiprid and Imidacloprid, in tea. The proposal reflects FSSAI's approach towards reviewing pesticide residue standards in light of scientific assessments, relevant international practices and the requirements of Indian agriculture.

The draft Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2026, published in the Gazette of India on 16 October 2026, propose MRLs of 20 mg/kg (20 ppm) for Acetamiprid and 50 mg/kg (50 ppm) for Imidacloprid in tea. The proposed limits are intended to provide clearly defined regulatory benchmarks for pesticide residues, facilitating compliance, monitoring and enforcement of food safety requirements, subject to finalisation of the draft regulations.

Notably, the proposed MRL of 20 ppm for Acetamiprid in tea is lower than the corresponding limits of 30 ppm in Japan and 50 ppm in the United States of America. The proposed limit for Imidacloprid has also been formulated with reference to

international Codex standards. These comparisons reflect the emphasis on considering internationally recognised regulatory practices while taking into account India's food safety priorities and domestic agricultural requirements.

The latest proposal forms part of FSSAI's broader regulatory approach towards the review and revision of pesticide residue standards. The Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2024, represented an important step in this process, involving a review of MRLs in light of available scientific data and international practices. Earlier regulatory measures also included the delisting of 13 pesticides identified as having higher toxicity, reflecting the continuing emphasis on appropriate regulatory safeguards and consumer protection.

Maximum Residue Limits are an important component of food safety regulation. They specify the maximum legally permitted concentration of pesticide residues in food commodities and are established on the basis of scientific assessments, taking into account pesticide residue data, dietary exposure and relevant safety considerations. These standards provide a measurable regulatory basis for monitoring pesticide residues and ensuring compliance with prescribed food safety requirements.

The proposed standards also recognise the importance of effective pest management in agricultural production. Pesticides, when used appropriately and in accordance with prescribed practices, help farmers protect crops against pests, minimise crop losses and maintain agricultural productivity. Access to suitable crop-protection measures can also support cost-effective farming practices. The regulatory approach therefore seeks to balance the requirements of agricultural production with the overarching priority of consumer safety.

India's comparatively low average pesticide use provides an important perspective on the country's agricultural practices. At less than 0.5 kg per hectare, India's average pesticide use is significantly below the estimated global average of 2.38 kg per hectare. It is also lower than the levels reported in several countries, including Colombia, Brazil and the United States of America.

Internationally, countries such as the United States, Japan and China, as well as members of the European Union, have registered a wide range of pesticides suited to their respective crops, climatic conditions and agricultural requirements. India's regulatory approach similarly seeks to take into account domestic crop-protection needs while maintaining appropriate safeguards for consumers through scientifically established residue limits.

For the tea sector, the proposed limits are intended to provide greater regulatory clarity to growers, processors, food businesses, testing laboratories and enforcement authorities. Clearly defined standards can facilitate consistent monitoring, responsible pesticide management and adherence to food safety requirements, while supporting confidence in the quality and safety of Indian tea.

The draft amendment reflects FSSAI's continued focus on evidence-based regulation, consumer protection and responsible agricultural practices. By combining scientific assessment, international regulatory considerations and stakeholder consultation, the proposed framework seeks to balance food safety priorities with the practical requirements of tea cultivation, while contributing to India's broader objective of maintaining a transparent and responsive food safety regulatory ecosystem.

The official Gazette Notification can be seen here: [https://egazette.gov.in/\(S\(i0tkolhyj5o3synuv0wkdfgn\)\)/ViewPDF.aspx](https://egazette.gov.in/(S(i0tkolhyj5o3synuv0wkdfgn))/ViewPDF.aspx)

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