



## MAJOR RELIEF FOR ALCOHOL MARKET PLAYERS

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### Major Relief for Alcohol Market Players

The Regulations mandate that regular beer or lager should be free of yeast while in draught beer the maximum yeast count must not exceed 40 CFU (colony-forming units). The Regulations do not put craft beer in a separate category which, generally have yeast content as high as 3 million CFU. As a result, craft brewers, who were in a state of dilemma expressed their difficulty before the regulator in implementation of these limits, and therefore, through the April 2 notification, FSSAI announced that the Regulations shall be effective minus the parameter for yeast in various categories of beer. Further, the Regulations also prescribed that from April 1, 2019 all liquor bottles shall carry cautionary messages, in capital letters, stating “Drinking is injurious to health” and “Don’t Drink and Drive” on their labels, in font size which is minimum 3 mm. Again, the stakeholders who have already invested in labels which do not contain these messages sought time from the regulator to implement this. As a result, the mandate was relaxed through the April 2 notification and alcoholic beverages which are manufactured prior to April 1, 2019 are now allowed to be sold with old labels until March 31, 2020. Further, size of the cautionary message has been relaxed to 1.5 mm in case of alcoholic beverage bottles of up to 200 ml but for bottles larger than 200 ml, the mandate of 3 mm stays as is.

**PSA View** – Until now, there was no standard document which could provide parameters to food safety officials to regulate the content of alcoholic beverages, which otherwise comes under the purview of “Food” under the FSSAI Act, and the Regulations address that issue. With respect to yeast count issue, it makes sense to extend the relaxation to other beers too until FSSAI can establish with sufficient evidence that yeast is a contaminant and cannot be treated only as raw material for beer. For imported alcoholic beverages, the Regulations require custom officials to ensure that non-detachable stickers are put on the bottles indicating the cautionary message. In our view, similar mandate could be put for domestic labels too versus granting relaxation of 1 year. Ultimately, consumers’ welfare is the goal.

**By:**

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