



Banning Cotton Candy

For Prelims: Banning Cotton Candy, Rhodamine B, [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#), Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006.

For Mains: Banning Cotton Candy, Food and Nutrition insecurity.

[Source: TOI](#)

Why in News?

Recently, Himachal Pradesh has instituted a one-year ban on the production, sale and storage of Cotton Candy or Candy floss after the presence of **Rhodamine B**, a potentially hazardous colouring agent.

- The ban is on the heels of states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Goa, which have implemented [similar restrictions on harmful colouring agents](#).
- Consumption of snacks containing these artificial colours may pose long-term health risks, including [Cancer](#).

What is Cotton Candy?

- Cotton candy, also known as **candy floss or fairy floss** in some regions, is a **type of spun sugar confectionery** that is typically served at carnivals, fairs, and amusement parks.
- It is made by heating and liquefying sugar and then spinning it out through tiny holes where it re-solidifies in long strands.
- These strands are gathered onto a **cone or stick, forming a fluffy, cotton-like texture**.

What is Rhodamine B?

- **About:**
 - **Rhodamine B** is a colouring agent commonly used in textile, paper, and leather industries. The colourant is **low-cost and is sometimes used to give vibrant hues** to popular street food items such as gobi manchurian and cotton candy.
 - The dye is not fit for consumption and may lead to acute toxicity. Exposure to the chemical may also damage the **eye and cause irritation in the respiratory tract**.
 - While the [World Health Organisation](#), which maintains a list of cancer-causing agents, says it cannot be classified as carcinogenic to humans, there are **some studies on rats that have shown carcinogenic effects**.
- **Usage in Food Products:**
 - It is not commonly added to food products, Rhodamine B is usually reported from small roadside vendors in small cities.
 - This is because of a **lack of understanding about dyes** that are permissible in food items. Small vendors are **not aware that this dye can be harmful as its effects might not always be felt immediately**.
 - It is usually “illegally” **added to preparations such as gobi manchurian, potato**

wedges, butter chicken, pomegranate juice, ice creams produced on a small scale, or cotton candies.

▪ **Legality:**

- [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) has specifically banned **Rhodamine B** from being used in food products.
- Any use of this chemical in the preparation, processing, and distribution of food is punishable **under the Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006**.

What Food Colours are Allowed by the Food Safety Act, 2006?

- The [FSSAI](#) allows the use of very few natural and synthetic colours in food items. They are,
 - **The Natural Food Colours:**
 - **Carotene and Carotenoids (yellow, orange):** These are natural pigments found in many fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, pumpkins, and tomatoes. They are responsible for the yellow, orange, and red colors in these foods.
 - **Chlorophyll (green):** Chlorophyll is the pigment responsible for the green colour in plants. It is commonly used as a natural food colouring agent.
 - **Riboflavin (yellow):** Riboflavin, also known as vitamin B2, is a yellow-coloured compound found in various foods. It is sometimes used as a food colouring agent.
 - **Caramel:** Caramel is a natural food colouring agent derived from the heating of sugar. It can range in colour from pale yellow to deep brown, depending on the degree of caramelization.
 - **Annatto (Orange-Red):** Annatto is a natural food colouring derived from the seeds of the achiote tree. It imparts a vibrant orange-red colour to foods and is commonly used in cheese, butter, and other dairy products.
 - **Saffron:** Saffron is a spice derived from the **flower of the Crocus sativus plant**. It is known for its intense yellow colour and is one of the most expensive spices in the world.
 - **Curcumin (Yellow, from Turmeric):** Curcumin is the main active compound found in turmeric. It is responsible for the yellow colour of this spice and is used as a natural food colouring agent.
 - **The Synthetic Colours:**
 - **Ponceau 4R:** A synthetic red colour commonly used in various food and beverage products.
 - **Carmoisine:** Another synthetic red colour often used in food colouring.
 - **Erythrosine:** A synthetic red colour commonly used in food colouring, especially in sweets and candies.
 - **Tartrazine and Sunset Yellow FCF:** Synthetic yellow colours widely used in various food products.
 - **Indigo Carmine and Brilliant Blue FCF:** Synthetic blue colours used in food colouring.
 - **Fast Green FCF:** A synthetic green colour used in food products.
- Even permissible food colourings, however, are not allowed in all food items. Some food items that can **use these colours include ice creams, biscuits, cakes**, confectioneries, fruit syrups and crushes, custard powder, jelly crystals, and carbonated or noncarbonated beverages.

What is the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India?

▪ **About:**

- FSSAI is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, of 2006.
 - The Act of 2006, consolidates various laws related to food, such as the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, the Fruit Products Order, 1955, the Meat Food Products Order, 1973, and other acts that were previously handled by different ministries and departments.
 - The **Act also aims to establish a single reference point for all matters relating to food safety** and standards, by moving from multi-level, multi-departmental control to a single line of command.
- FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health by regulating and

supervising food safety and quality in India, operating under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

- FSSAI has a headquarters in New Delhi and regional offices in eight zones across the country.
- The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of FSSAI, appointed by central government. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

▪ **Functions and Powers:**

- Framing of regulations and standards for food products and additives.
- Granting of licences and registration to food businesses.
- Enforcement of food safety laws and regulations.
- Monitoring and surveillance of food safety and quality.
- Conducting risk assessment and scientific research on food safety issues.
- Providing training and awareness on food safety and hygiene.
- Promoting food fortification and organic food.
- Coordinating with other agencies and stakeholders on food safety matters.

▪ **Events and Campaigns:**

- [World Food Safety Day](#).
- [Eat Right India](#).
 - [Eat Right Station](#).
 - [Eat Right Mela](#).
- [State Food Safety Index](#).
- [RUCO \(Repurpose Used Cooking Oil\)](#).
- [Food Safety Mitra](#).
- [100 Food Streets](#).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 replaced the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
2. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is under the charge of Director General of Health Services in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q.1 Elaborate the policy taken by the Government of India to meet the challenges of the food processing sector. **(2021)**