

CAUTIONS CONSUMERS AGAINST SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

‘No Palm Oil’ Tag in Packaged Foods a Marketing Tool: IFBA

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The Indian Food and Beverage Association (IFBA), which counts McDonald's, Wingreens and Ferrero as members, has flagged “no palm oil” labels in packaged foods as “misleading marketing gimmicks”, amid increasing number of brands using the tag claiming to be a differentiator.

“Labels like ‘palm oil free’ overshadow credible dietary guidance and have become a marketing tool. Food choices are often driven by social media trends rather than scientific evidence,” IFBA said, Tuesday. The organisation further “cautioned consumers against taking health advice from influencers who amplify half-truths without nutritional expertise.”

Dozens of biscuits, snacks and bakery products on retail shelves as well as selling direct-to-consumer have been promoting “no palm oil” on their labels. Some of these are higher priced than packs of similar quantities.

The note by IFBA further said palm oil “continues to be misunderstood due to selective branding tactics that exploit health-related fears”, adding that it remains a widely-used affordable and accessible edible oil.



“In today’s digital era, food choices are often driven by social media trends rather than scientific evidence. With India consuming 26 million tonnes of edible oil annually, including 9 million tonnes of palm oil, this trend has fuelled misconceptions,” IFBA added in the note, stating that palm oil “has a well-rounded fatty acid profile with zero trans fats.”

Shilpa Agrawal, director, scientific and regulatory affairs, IFBA, said: “The Dietary Guidelines for Indians – 2024 of the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition clearly acknowledge the role of tocotrienols in palm oil in lowering cholesterol and supporting heart health. It recommends a rotation of edible oils, including palm oil, for a balanced fatty acid profile. This is science, not speculation.”