FSSAI

FSSAI sets SOP for food Bills of Entry Customs refers manually

FSSAI's November 19, 2026 SOP says food Bills of Entry that Customs refers by email or hard copy are to be recorded and processed in FICS as Draft/Non-SWIFT.

FSSAI HAS SET A STANDARD Operating Procedure so that a food Bill of Entry (BoE) that Customs refers manually, by email or hard copy, is recorded and processed in its Food Import Clearance System (FICS). The Trade and International Cooperation Division of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India sent the SOP to all its Regional Directors by letter File No. TIC-C-3014/2/2025-IMPORTS-FSSAI, dated November 19, 2026, signed by Manvesh Kumar, IRS, Director (Trade and International Cooperation). It is copied to the Joint Secretary (Customs) and the Director (Customs), CBIC, and to all FSSAI Authorised Officers.

KEY FACTS

AUTHORITY

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Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Trade and International Cooperation Division

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Letter with enclosed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), File No. TIC-C-3014/2/2025-IMPORTS-FSSAI

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FSSAI · November 19, 2026

FSSAI has set a Standard Operating Procedure so that a food Bill of Entry (BoE) that Customs refers manually, by email or hard copy, is recorded and processed in its Food Import Clearance System (FICS). The Trade and International Cooperation Division of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India sent the SOP to all its Regional Directors by letter File No. TIC-C-3014/2/2025-IMPORTS-FSSAI, dated November 19, 2026, signed by Manvesh Kumar, IRS, Director (Trade and International Cooperation). It is copied to the Joint Secretary (Customs) and the Director (Customs), CBIC, and to all FSSAI Authorised Officers.

The letter says FICS is integrated with the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) through ICEGATE under SWIFT 2.0, and BoEs for imported food needing FSSAI clearance are referred electronically. It has "been observed" that, "due to different technical and other reasons", some BoEs are referred manually through email or hard copies. These are not captured in FICS automatically, "resulting in a lack of proper traceability and records" and their exclusion from the system-generated food import data.

Regional Directors and Authorised Officers are "requested to ensure" three things. All BoEs manually referred by Customs are brought on record and processed through FICS under the approved procedure. The reasons for manual referral are documented in FICS. No manually referred case is left unrecorded in the FICS portal. Regional Directors "shall ensure strict compliance" and "sensitise the Authorised Officers" in their jurisdictions.

Under the SOP, the jurisdictional Customs AC/DC sends a request to the FSSAI Authorised Officer (AO) by email from an official email ID or by a signed official letter. The request gives the BoE number, BoE date, port of import, country of origin, IECODE, CHA code and the reason for manual referral, with supporting documents. The AO checks that the BoE is not available for processing through SWIFT, then forwards the request to the IT Division at FSSAI headquarters, under intimation to the Regional Director and the Trade and International Cooperation division at headquarters.

The IT Division creates a draft application link on the FICS portal and makes it available to the CHA or importer, who files the application, uploads the documents and makes the payments through FICS. These applications are marked in FICS as Draft/Non-SWIFT BoEs and go through the existing FICS workflow, including scrutiny, payment, inspection, sampling, laboratory testing and the final clearance decision, wherever applicable.

Once the final decision, a No Objection Certificate (NOC) or a Non-Conformance Certificate (NCC), is generated, the AO communicates it to the Customs authorities through official email. The CHA or importer can also download the payment receipts, NOC and NCC, as applicable, from the FICS portal against the Draft/Non-SWIFT application.

The SOP is "exclusively for genuine cases manually referred by Customs where electronic referral through SWIFT has not taken place". "Under no circumstances" is a draft link to be generated for a BoE already referred and available for processing through SWIFT. The AO and the IT Division are to ensure this, to prevent duplicate applications, parallel processing and discrepancies in clearance records.

Issued by	Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Trade and International Cooperation Division
Document	Letter with enclosed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), File No. TIC-C-3014/2/2025-IMPORTS-FSSAI
Dated	November 19, 2026
Subject	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for processing of Manually Referred Bill of Entry from Customs to FSSAI
Addressed to	The Regional Directors (All), FSSAI; copied to the Joint Secretary (Customs) and the Director (Customs), CBIC, and all FSSAI Authorised Officers
Applies to	Food Bills of Entry referred by Customs by email or hard copy, not electronically through SWIFT
Who starts it	The jurisdictional Customs AC/DC, by official email or signed official letter to the FSSAI Authorised Officer
Request must give	BoE number, BoE date, port of import, country of origin, IECODE, CHA code, reason for manual referral, supporting documents
Filing	By the CHA or importer, through a draft link the FSSAI IT Division creates on the FICS portal
How it is marked	Draft/Non-SWIFT BoE
Final decision	NOC or NCC, sent by the Authorised Officer to Customs by official email; downloadable by the CHA or importer from FICS
Not allowed	A draft link for a BoE already referred and available for processing through SWIFT
Signed by	Manvesh Kumar, IRS, Director (Trade and International Cooperation)

The letter with standard operating procedure (PDF, 1.2 MB)

Source: FSSAI's own copy.

Checked against the official copy on November 21, 2026.

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