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Karnataka Proposes Beer Label Rule on Added Sugar

Draft amendment would cap sugar use in brewing and require breweries to disclose it on packaging

Friday, April 17, 2026



Karnataka has proposed new rules that would require beer makers to disclose added sugar on labels and limit how much they can use in production, in a move that could affect one of India’s largest beer markets and force breweries to adjust recipes,

sourcing and packaging.

The draft amendment, published on April 10, would cap the use of sugar at 25% of the weight of malt used in brewing. It would also require manufacturers to state on the label whether sugar has been added, giving consumers a clearer view of what is in the bottle or can.

The proposal comes as state regulators look more closely at ingredients used in beer and at how those ingredients are presented to buyers. In Karnataka, where beer sales are significant and competition among domestic and international brands is intense, even a small change in formulation rules can have a broad effect on production costs and compliance planning.

Beer makers often use sugar in brewing for different reasons, including to influence alcohol content, body and fermentation. But the practice is not always obvious to consumers, especially when labels focus on brand identity, alcohol strength and style rather than ingredient details. The draft rule would make that information more visible.

If adopted, the change would apply to breweries operating under Karnataka’s bottling and labeling regulations. Companies would need to review recipes to ensure sugar levels stay within the new ceiling and update packaging to reflect the ingredient disclosure requirement. That could mean changes in procurement, production schedules and label approvals.

The draft has been issued for public comment before it can be finalized. Industry officials are expected to examine whether the proposed limit is practical across different beer styles and whether it could affect products already sold in the state.

Karnataka is one of India’s key beer-consuming states, with a large urban market centered on Bengaluru and a growing demand for premium and craft beers. Any shift in labeling or ingredient rules there is likely to draw attention from brewers beyond the state as well, since national brands often tailor products to local regulations.

For consumers, the proposal would make it easier to know whether sugar was used in making a beer they buy. For producers, it would add another layer of oversight at a time when beverage companies are already dealing with tighter scrutiny over labeling,

taxation and product standards.