

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Minutes of a Technical Meeting with Trade on the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information (Importers'/Suppliers' Subgroup) held on 9 January 2008 at 2:30 p.m. in Conference Hall, 3rd Floor, Edinburgh Place, Central

PRESENT:

Government Representatives

Dr HO Yuk-yin	Consultant (Community Medicine), FEHD	(Chairman)
Ms Kay KWOK	Assistant Secretary, FHB	
Dr Anna WONG	Head (Risk Assessment Section), FEHD	
Dr Stephen CHUNG	Senior Chemist (Food Research laboratory), FEHD	
Mr LEUNG Sui-sum	Superintendent (Risk Assessment), FEHD	
Mr CHUNG Kwok-wah	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling), FEHD	
Ms Melissa LIU	Scientific Officer (Nutrition), FEHD	
Ms Jacqueline FUNG	Scientific Officer (Nutrition Labelling), FEHD	(Note-taker)

Trade Representatives

Ms. Lilian TANG	AIC Merchandising (Japan) Ltd.,
Ms. Ming CHEUNG	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Mr. Alan KWOK	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Mr. PAK Siu-wa	China Inspection Co., Ltd.
Ms. TO Ki-sim	Classic Fine Foods (HK) Ltd.
Mr. KONG Pak-wing, Ricky	CMA Testing and Certification Laboratories
Mr. WONG Tak-chuen	CMA Testing and Certification Laboratories
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Ms. CHOI Pik-yan, Kathie	Ferrero Asia Limited
Ms. Debby LAW	Fonterra Brands (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodscan Analytics Ltd.
Mr. Ray WONG	Friesland Foods HK
Ms. Eleanor CHAN	Hong Kong Suppliers Assoc. Ltd.

Mr.	Albert TANG	Hong Kong Suppliers Assoc. Ltd.
Ms.	CHOW Pik-shan	Kellogg Asia Marketing
Ms.	Fina LAM	Lark Remedies Ltd.
Ms.	Becky LAU	Mars Foods Inc.
Ms.	Jenny LOH	Mars Foods Inc.
Mr.	Philip KWAN	Mean Johnson
Mr.	Samuel CHOU	Muji (Hong Kong) Company Limited
Ms.	Sandy Lai	Muji (Hong Kong) Company Limited
Ms.	German CHEUNG	Pappagallo Pacific Limited
Ms.	YU Grace	Procter & Gamble Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms.	LAW Suk-kwan, Yolanda	Saison Food Service Limited
Mr.	Wellock Lo	Sims Trading Co., Ltd.
Mr.	Lewis I.S. LING	Taikoo Sugar Limited
Mr.	HO Kwok-ying	The Asia Provisions Co., Ltd.
Mr.	Ronald LAU	The Hong Kong Food Council Ltd.
Miss	Frenda WONG	The Kowloon Dairy Ltd.
Mr.	Eric AU	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr.	Albert YAN	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms.	HUNG Kai-yee, Olivia	Wyeth (H.K.) Limited
Ms.	KU Chui-yee, Accacia	Wyeth (H.K.) Limited

Welcoming Remarks

1. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming the trade representatives.

Agenda Item 1

Confirmation of Minutes

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2007 were tabled. The Chairman suggested if no comments were received in a week's time, the minutes of last meeting would be confirmed.

[Post-meeting note: No comments were received and thus the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2007 were confirmed.]

Agenda Item 2
Matters Arising

3. With regard to the exemption list, the Chairman informed the meeting that the Administration was rephrasing the wording so as to achieve its intended purposes. Nevertheless, the principles remained the same. Details of the exemption list would be further discussed at the next technical meeting, including the exemption on prepackaged foods sold at a catering establishment

4. Two trade representatives urged the Administration to consider exempting returnable glass bottles because bottles with the same design were used on different products. The cost would be increased in case collars were used to provide nutrition information.

Agenda Item 3
Technical Guidance Note on the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information
(Draft)

5. The Chairman told the meeting that the Secretary for Food and Health committed at the LegCo meeting that the Technical Guidance Note would be issued at the same time as the passage of the regulations. However, as time would be needed to make changes and to seek legal advice/comment on the final draft of the Technical Guidance Note, the Administration planned to issue the final draft of the document with the passage of the amendment regulation. The final guidance note, with comments from the trade incorporated, would be made available within 2-3 months after the passage of the regulations.

6. Ms FUNG briefed the participants on the draft of the Technical Guidance Note (Annex I). She stressed that the Technical Guidance Note should be used as a reference document. The trade should refer to the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations for detailed legal provisions.

7. The Chairman remarked that although some of the requirements previous suggested would not be included in the proposed Amendment Regulations, the Administration encouraged the trade to follow the recommended labelling format detailed in the Technical Guidance Note as standardized nutrition labels would be easier for consumers to use.

Abbreviations and Common Names of Nutrients

8. A participant enquired whether “Sat fat” would be allowed as abbreviation of “Saturated fat”. The Chairman said the Administration would consider the suggestions. He then told the meeting that the list would not be an exhaustive list and it was intended for reference purpose.

Definition of Trans Fatty Acids

9. With regard to the definition of trans fatty acids, Dr CHUNG said the proposed definition was adopted from the Codex Guidelines and it was based on the chemical structure, and not defined as natural or artificial trans fatty acids.

Nutrient Reference Value (NRV)

10. It was stressed that the Chinese NRV should be applied when determining conditions for selected nutrient content claims. The Chairman reiterated that the development of NRVs involved local experts and experts from the Mainland and therefore would not be changed easily.

Nutrition Claims

11. Several participants urged the Administration to extend the permitted list of nutrient content claims to cover claims not on the Codex Guidelines. The Chairman indicated that the Administration remained open to other claims and would consider adopting them if they were widely adopted internationally. Nevertheless, he suggested the trade to provide information for the Administration’s consideration.

12. A participant asked whether “low sodium salt” used as an ingredient and listed in the ingredient list would be considered as a nutrient content claim. Ms FUNG explained that the mentioning of “low sodium salt” as an ingredient on the ingredient list would not be viewed as a claim, since it was the name of one of the ingredients.

Synonyms on Nutrient Content Claims and Nutrient Comparative Claims

13. Comments were received on the list of synonyms, such as “超低” and “超高”. Also, a participant was concerned about the use of the words “light” or “lite”. Ms FUNG explained that according to Codex, “light” or “lite” should be used in the context of nutrient comparative claims.

14. Ms FUNG stressed that those synonyms for “Very low” should not be used for the “Low” claim, if there was not a “Very low” claim definition for the nutrients. For example, prepackaged food should not bear an “Extremely low cholesterol”

claim as there was not a “Very low cholesterol” condition defined under the proposed regulations.

Tolerance Limits

15. Several trade representatives commented that the levels of some nutrients in prepackaged foods, particularly vitamins, changed with time. The Chairman said the trade should take into account this factor when declaring the nutrient contents in nutrition labels. The routine surveillance programme would sample prepackaged foods at any time when they were made available for sale at the retail outlets.

Method Guideline on Nutrition Information (Draft)

16. The Chairman told the meeting that along with the Technical Guidance Notes, the Administration would issue a Method Guideline on Nutrition Information. The draft document would be discussed at a separate technical meeting with laboratory services providers.

Agenda 4

Technical Workshop on Nutrition Labelling

17. To further facilitate the trade in making changes, the Administration would conduct technical workshop on nutrition labelling. Depending on the demand of the workshop, initially the Administration would plan to conduct two sessions of the workshop and members of the trade were encouraged to attend.

Agenda Item 5

Any Other Business

18. The Chairman told the meeting that the Administration planned to table the amendment regulation at the LegCo between February and April 2008. Before then, there would be another technical meeting covering the proposed exemption list, small volume exemption and the revised Technical Guidance Notes. Furthermore, as the discussion on the proposed Scheme was approaching the final stage, different sectors of the trade had very similar concerns, thus instead of having three separate sessions of technical meetings (i.e., separate meetings for manufacturers, importer/suppliers and retailers), the Administration would organize one meeting for the trade.

19. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.