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Mr Peter Johnston
Chairman of Taskforce on Nutrition Labelling Scheme
Hong Kong Retail Management Association
10/F, First Commercial Building
33-35 Leighton Road
Causeway Bay
Hong Kong

Dear Mr. Johnston,

Re: Nutrition Labelling Market Survey

Thank you for your letter dated 17 August 2009 and your valuable comments on the Nutrition Labelling Market Survey (Market Survey). The support of the trade is crucial to the success of the survey. Their opinions and comments are most welcomed so that the Market Survey could meet the needs of the trade as well as the community. Regarding the issues raised in your letter, I would like to provide the following responses:

(1) Objectives of the survey

Using the proposed methodology, the survey would be able to achieve the three objectives set. For the additional objectives such as Small Volume Exemption ("SVE") costs, blackening out costs that you suggested, we are also interested in them. However, the assessment can only be made with the assistance of the trade. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to solicit the support of the trade for providing such information to us, so that we could incorporate them in the report of the Market Survey as appropriate. As regards the benefits of the NL scheme to consumers, an assessment has already been done in the previous regulatory impact assessment.

(2) Methodology

We are aware of the limitations of the survey as pointed out in your letter. As you know, the local retailers are very diverse. With limited resources and time, it would be a daunting task to cover a large number of retail shops. However, from a research perspective regarding product coverage, our proposed methodology would be able to cover a representative range of food products in the market and would be able to help us achieve the three objectives

set. Though the number of retail shops covered is small, in terms of number of pre-packaged food items covered, it is very comprehensive. It is estimated that some 20% of the total number of pre-packaged food, in terms of varieties, in the market would be covered i.e. around 20,000 pre-packaged food products would be covered out of around 100,000 pre-packaged food products available in the market (upper range of previous estimation from various sources). The sampling fraction of the study is comparable to any credible surveys.

For the shops to be sampled, all the major categories of shops, large and small, high end and low end, will be covered. These include major supermarket, high-end supermarket, Japanese supermarket, specialty shops (organic, health food and snacks) and shops for major ethnic groups. If you consider that any major category of shops is missing, please advise us so that we can include them in our survey.

In addition to information collected from the fieldwork, additional information supplied by the trade would be very useful in producing better estimates. Further information, such as statistics and information from each company (e.g. product database/list of pre-packaged food products, proportion of products unique to their shops) would definitely help us to fill in the gaps identified and hence refine the interpretation of the results generated in the Market Survey. We would much appreciate if the trade could provide this information to us.

Your suggestion of including laboratory testing for the compliance rate assessment in the Market Survey is actually part of our plan. Since laboratory testing is required, the study will be conducted as a separate exercise. In fact, we have already conducted similar studies before but the one to be conducted early next year would be a more comprehensive one as far as compliance checking is concerned.

(3) Impact of Small Volume Exemption (SVE) on Consumers

With respect to your comments in connection with the SVE scheme, its impact can be assessed once we have collected enough information from the database for SVE applications. As some of the assessments you suggested involve trade data, we would be grateful if you would urge members of your association to provide those information to us. If the information is trade sensitive, they can provide the information directly to MVA. The information can be incorporated into the report, yet keeping source of the information strictly confidential.

Concerning the survey on consumers' opinion of the new NL scheme, we wish to point out that a base-line survey had been conducted in May 2008 and another survey is planned to be conducted after the implementation of NL scheme. Thanks for your suggestion and we would include consumers' view

on SVE in the coming survey.

We hope the clarifications above have addressed the concerns of HKRMA on the Market Survey. The support of your association is vital to the success of the Market Survey. We stand ready to have further discussions with your association.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr Constance Chan)

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Ms Caroline Mak, Chairman, Hong Kong Retail Management Association