

# **LEGCO PANEL ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

## **Food Labelling Requirements in Hong Kong**

### **Purpose**

This paper briefly introduces the purpose of food labelling and the labelling requirements in Hong Kong.

### **Objective of Food Labelling**

2. Food labelling is the primary channel for manufacturers to communicate with their consumers. It serves as a tool for the food industry to inform and attract potential buyers on the one hand and assists consumers to make informed choices on the other.

### **Legislative Requirements**

3. Under the Public Health and Municipal Service Ordinance (Cap. 132), Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, all pre-packaged food<sup>1</sup>, regardless of whether it is a parallel imported product, is required to bear labels that contain the following information:-

- (a) Name of the food;
- (b) Ingredients, including food additives;
- (c) Durability period;
- (d) Special condition for storage or instruction for use;

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<sup>1</sup> All food, except of products which are specifically exempted by Schedule 4 of the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations.

- (e) Quantity; and
- (f) Name and address of manufacturer or the packer.

4. Items (a) to (e) are for the benefit of the consumers and are designed for food safety assurance. Item (f) is to facilitate the regulatory authority in tracing the source and where necessary exercising control measures (e.g. food recall) to minimize potential damage in cases of product-related food incidents. As the purpose is to obtain information relevant to food safety control, only one party near the source of the supply of a food product, instead of all parties involved in the distribution of the product, is required to be listed.

5. Despite the inclusion of the manufacturer's information on food labels, the onus is on the seller, who must exercise due diligence to ensure compliance with the labelling requirements. In fact, the seller-liability concept applies for all food safety related legislations. Any one who sells prepackaged food without proper label is subject to a maximum penalty of \$50,000 fine and 6-month imprisonment.

6. As the food authority, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is the enforcement agent for all food safety related legislations, including the mandatory labelling requirements, licensing of local food premises and import control of high risk food products. In addition, random sampling of all food available in the market, regardless of whether it is parallel imported, is carried out under the regular food surveillance programme. Food samples collected are subject to microbiological, chemical and/or radioactivity tests.

## **Need for additional labelling requirements**

7. The labelling requirements for prepackaged food provide the authority with adequate information to safeguard public health against product-related food hazards. They also ensure that the consumers are provided with essential information concerning food safety. We keep the food labelling requirements under review in the light of changing circumstances and the latest international practices and standards. Nevertheless, from the angle of food safety control, we do not consider the mandatory inclusion of importers' information on food labels would be of material benefit to either the consumers or the regulator.

**Environment and Food Bureau**

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