

[Item no. 1 on the list of follow up actions]

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Labelling of Genetically Modified Food

Background

There is currently no international consensus on labelling of genetically modified (GM) food. In the past few years, the Committee on Food Labelling of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) has been discussing the issue of GM food labelling. However, due to the diverse views among its member states, it is unlikely that the Codex can reach a consensus on the issue of GM food labelling in the near future.

International situation

2. At present, the regulatory approach on GM food labelling varies among overseas economies, and can be broadly classified into mandatory and voluntary.
3. The mandatory approach can be further divided into the "labelling of designated GM products only" and "pan-labelling" approaches. For the "labelling of designated GM products", labelling is only required if the food products contain designated GM materials (e.g. soya bean and corn). The Mainland, Japan and Taiwan are adopting this approach. For the "pan-labelling approach", it requires the labelling of any food that contains GM ingredients exceeding a threshold level. The European Union, Australia, New Zealand and Korea are adopting this approach.
4. The voluntary labelling approach only requires the labelling of GM food that is significantly different from its conventional counterpart, in terms of composition, nutritional value and allergenicity. The United States and Canada are adopting this approach.

5. Furthermore, among the overseas economies with GM food labelling systems, whether voluntary or mandatory, the specified levels of GM materials requiring labelling may vary significantly from 0.9% to 5%, in addition to differences in the type of food covered and the scope of the systems. A table setting out the labelling system on GM food currently adopted by different overseas places is at Annex.

Food and Health Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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Overseas labelling system on GM Food

Place	Labelling system
USA	Voluntary
Canada	Voluntary
South Africa	Voluntary
EU	Mandatory pan-labelling at 0.9% threshold
Australia / New Zealand	Mandatory pan-labelling at 1% threshold
Korea	Mandatory labelling of designated GM products at 3% threshold
	Mandatory pan-labelling of all approved GM products at 3% threshold
Japan	Mandatory labelling of designated GM products at 5% threshold
Thailand	Mandatory labelling of designated GM products at 5% threshold
Mainland	Mandatory labelling of designated GM products; no threshold specified
Taiwan	Mandatory labelling of designated GM products at 5% threshold
Singapore	No specific requirement