

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 7 April 2005 at 2:30 p.m.
in Room 4549, 45th Floor, Queensway Government Offices**

PRESENT:

Government Representatives

Dr HO Yuk-yin	Consultant (Community Medicine), FEHD	(Chairman)
Ms SHEA Wing-man	Assistant Secretary, HWFB	
Mr Stanley NG	Senior Administrative Officer (Food and Public Health), FEHD	
Dr Priscilla KWOK	Senior Medical Officer (Risk Assessment), FEHD	
Dr Stephen CHUNG	Senior Chemist (Food Research Laboratory), FHED	
Mr YIP Ming-bor	Superintendent (Risk Assessment), FEHD	
Mr LI Ka-kei	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling), FEHD	
Ms Jacqueline FUNG	Scientific Officer (Risk Assessment), FEHD	(Note-taker)

Trade Representatives

Mr Ronald LAU	Vice President, The Hong Kong Food Council
Ms Elisa TANG	Committee Member, The Hong Kong Food Council
Ms Eleanor CHAN	Committee Member, Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Ms Betty LEUNG	Committee Member, Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Ms Frenda WONG	Committee Member, Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Mr Jacky YU	Committee Member, Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Mr Cleve LEE	Marketing Assistant, Champion Fair Ltd.
Ms Daphne LAM	Logistic Manager, China Pacific Group Ltd.

Ms Amy YEUNG	Marketing Manager, China Pacific Group Ltd.
Ms Cherry WONG	Sales Director, Friesland Foods Ltd.
Mr HO Kwok-ying	Alternated Director & Senior Manager, The Asia Provisions Co. Ltd.
Mr Lee Kwong-lam	General Manager, Tung Tai Hong
Mr LI Kin-ming	Deputy General Manager, Yuen Tai Trading Co. Ltd.

Agenda Item 1

Confirmation of Minutes

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 August 2004 were confirmed without further amendments.

Agenda Item 2

Progress Update on the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information

2. Dr P KWOK briefed participants on the results of the public consultation exercise, results of the public opinion survey, results of the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and the revised proposal on the nutrition labelling scheme (Annex 1).
3. After learning the results of the RIA study, some trade representatives questioned the reliability and validity of the assessment. Dr P KWOK stressed that the local RIA study was designed with reference to relevant overseas RIA studies. She reiterated that the study applied local disease data (e.g., prevalence rates, public hospital admission data, etc.) for assessing the benefits of the proposed scheme. The Consultants also invited the health economists from the University of Hong Kong and other economic and health experts to review the benefits analysis. Moreover, the Consultants conducted a market survey and interviewed laboratory services providers and packaging and labelling firms for information on cost analysis. The Chairman supplemented that taking into consideration the causes of some chronic diseases, it was assumed that the benefits brought about would take 15 years to accrue. Thus, the costs-benefits analysis was conducted over a 20-year period.
4. Most representatives remarked that the costs for prepackaged food products would be increased due to nutrition labelling and a participant opined that the trade would contribute most of the costs; she asked whether the Government would offer any assistance

to the trade. The Chairman said that the Administration would publish guidelines on nutrition labelling and nutrient testing methods for the trade's reference and the guidelines would be made available within one year of the enactment of the nutrition labelling regulations. Furthermore, workshops would be conducted to assist the trade in making the changes. Representatives from the trade urged the Administration to release the guidelines as soon as possible. The Chairman said the Government would continue to have dialogues with the trade on the development of the scheme; therefore, they would be kept informed about the details of the requirements before the release of the guidelines.

5. Several participants remarked that the nutrition labelling requirements were very stringent, only being less stringent than the requirements in the USA and Canada. They urged the Administration to reconsider accepting "source country" nutrition labelling requirements. With regard to the enforcement aspect, participants asked about (a) the surveillance scheme for nutrition labelling, including the demerit point system; and (b) the tolerance limits for declared nutrient values. Mr KK LI said that all prepackaged food products, regardless the origin, were subject to random labelling checks, i.e., both local and overseas prepackaged food products would be sampled in the surveillance scheme. Under the current FEHD's policy, if a licensed food premises was convicted under the Food Labelling Regulations, points would be deducted under the demerit point system.

6. As for tolerance limits, the Chairman indicated that all enforcement actions would be based on test results obtained by the Government Laboratory and the Administration would set tolerance limits for various nutrients. With reference to overseas nutrition labelling regulations/guidelines, tolerance limits were commonly set at $\pm 20\%$. The Chairman informed the meeting that setting of tolerance limits would be discussed in future technical meetings.

7. The trade representatives anticipated that the proposed scheme would discourage the launch of new products as the cost for nutrition labelling would be quite substantial. They urged the Administration to consider expanding the exemption list. The Chairman revealed that the Administration had considered various exemption items, including new products. However, some of them were not practical as they might impose enforcement difficulties.

8. One of the participants suggested the Administration to provide a list of appointed laboratories for nutrient testings. The Chairman said the Administration had no plan on appointing laboratory services providers for nutrient testings, but would encourage the trade

to contact accredited laboratories for laboratory services, e.g., laboratories recognized under the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (HOKLAS).

Agenda Item 3

Any Other Business

9. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.