

Durability Indication of Prepackaged Food

Centre for Food Safety

Background

- According to Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, Cap.132W, prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labelled with appropriate durability indication in prescribed format.
- Type of durability indication :
 1. Use by (此日期或之前食用) date
 2. Best before (此日期前最佳) date

Use by (此日期或之前食用) date

- It applies to food items that are highly perishable from the micro-biological point of view, such as pasteurized milk, prepackaged sandwiches with egg and ham, prepackaged chilled beef, mutton or pork.
- These foods can be stored only for a relatively short time after manufacturing and are likely to constitute an immediate danger to human health if consumed after the "use by" date. Therefore, sale of such foods after their "use by" date is prohibited.

Best before (此日期前最佳) date

- It applies to general food items such as candies and canned beverages.
- Best before (此日期前最佳) date indicates the date before which specific properties of the food, such as its colour, taste and appearance, can be maintained at optimal conditions if the food is properly stored. It does not mean that the food would necessarily perish immediately or pose a risk to human health after this date.

Offence

- Sale of prepackaged food with durability indication not in prescribed format or sale of prepackaged food beyond Use by (此日期或之前食用) date is an offence.
- Prosecution will be taken and offender will be liable to a fine at Level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for 6 months.

Alteration to durability indication

- According to existing legislation, any person who, not being the manufacturer or packer originally responsible for so marking or labelling the food or without written authorization from person mentioned above, alters, removes or obliterates the food label is an offence. The offender will be liable to a fine at Level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for 6 months.

Advice to the trade

- Take note of the durability of foods being sold at all times. Adopted the “First-in-first-out” principle for food storage. Do not sell food that has passed the expiry date to safeguard public health.
- In addition to the “use by” dates, pay attention to the packaging. If the packaging is damaged, the food may have been contaminated or deteriorated even though it is still within the durability period.

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