

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Indication of Durability for Prepackaged Food

5.10.2016



Background

- According to Food & Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, Cap.132W , prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labelled with the appropriate durability indication.
- Use either the words "use by" (此日期或之前食用) or "best before" (此日期前最佳) , as the case may be, followed by the date up to which specific properties of the food can be retained, to indicate the shelf life of the food.



Indication by Arabic numerals

- According to paragraph 4 of Schedule 3 to the Regulations, indication of durability in Arabic numerals can appear in any order. The day shall be indicated by the words "DD", "dd", "D" or "d" in English lettering and "日" in Chinese character; the month shall be indicated by the words "MM", "mm", "M" or "m" in English lettering and "月" in Chinese character; and the year shall be indicated by the words "YY", "yy", "Y" or "y" in English lettering and "年" in Chinese character.
- following examples are considered acceptable:
 - (a) 年Y 月M 日D ;
 - (b) Y年 D日 M月 ;
 - (c) 日dd 月mm 年yy;
 - (d) y年 m月 d日 ;
 - (e) Y年 M月 D日 ;
 - (f) DD日 MM月 YY年.



"best before" (此日期前最佳) date

- The "best before" (此日期前最佳) date shall be indicated by the words "best before" in English lettering and "此日期前最佳" in Chinese characters followed by the date up to and including which the food can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties if properly stored, and a statement of any storage conditions which need to be observed if the food is to retain its specific properties until that date.



"best before" (此日期前最佳) date

- “Best before” date relates to food quality for example taste, texture, aroma and appearance. If the food is stored properly, it can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties up to and including the specified date.



"use by" (此日期或之前食用) date

- The "use by" (此日期或之前食用) date shall be indicated by the words "use by" in English lettering and "此日期或之前食用" in Chinese characters followed by the date up to and including which the food, if properly stored, is recommended for use, and a statement of any storage conditions which need to be observed if the food is to retain its quality attributes until that date.



["use by" (此日期或之前食用) date]

- “use by” date refers to food safety. From microbiological point of view, the food is highly perishable and is therefore likely after a short period to constitute an immediate danger to human health.



Offence

- Under Food & Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, Cap.132W, it is an offence to sell any food after its “use by” date.
- Any person who, not being the food manufacturer or packer or without their written authorization, alters, removes or obliterates any particulars on the label required under the Regulations also commits an offence.



END

