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**China, Peoples Republic of**  
**Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and**  
**Standards**  
**Chinese Labeling Requirements for Importing and**  
**Exporting Food and Cosmetic Products**  
**2000**

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**Report Highlights:**

**The new labeling law was put into effect from April 1, 2000. This new labeling process is a new way of law enforcement; it will streamline operations, limit redundancy, improve the efficiency of label application processing, and the effectiveness of preventing fake and low quality products from entering the China market.**

**Purposes of the labeling law:**

1. The new labeling law was put into effect from April 1, 2000. This label examination and approval process is to assure the quality control of the imported and exported food and cosmetic products; to protect the interest of both consumers and businessmen. In the past, labeling was not strictly implemented. There had been cases that some of the labels on the products did not show production date, validity date, production origin, or even the ingredients, etc. Since those labels were not informative enough, it was hard for consumers to distinguish the real products from the fake ones.
2. This new labeling process is a new way of law enforcement; it will streamline operations, limit redundancy and improve the efficiency of label application processing. C.I.Q. will separate the applications for food label certificates into two categories. For category 1, the process will be much simplified, therefore, it will save lots of time for the application process and reduce expenses as well.
3. After joining WTO, China has to meet the business standard of other countries in the Organization. Since many countries are implementing stricter requirements on labeling, China needs a better labeling system to improve the competition capability of its exported products and to avoid disputes when exported products arrived at foreign countries. The new labeling law will also improve the effectiveness of preventing fake and low quality products from entering the China market.

**Labeling enforcement procedures:**

1. Agencies in charge:

The five appointed enforcement agencies are Beijing C.I.Q., Shanghai C.I.Q., Guangdong C.I.Q., Hubei C.I.Q. and also China Inspection Limited Co.(Hong Kong). Under each one of them, there are several agencies handling the label application process. For Guangdong area, importers and exporters at different cities could apply to the following agencies. They are Shantou C.I.Q., Zhanjiang C.I.Q., Zhongshan C.I.Q., Jiangmen C.I.Q., Dongguan C.I.Q., Fushan C.I.Q., Nanhai C.I.Q. and Guangzhou C.I.Q.

2. Application procedures:

According to Regulations on Import and Export Food Product Label Application No. 19, importers and exporters should provide all the necessary documents along with product samples to C.I.Q. to apply for label certificates 90 days before the actual shipping date. C.I.Q. will examine the documents and inspect the samples. When they meet all the label requirements, C.I.Q. will approve the applications and issue the label certificates.

For imported products, the labels must comply with the regulations of Chinese government; while for exported products, the labels must comply with the regulations of the importing countries. If importers or exporters have any label certificates issued by former Product Inspection agencies or Health Bureau of P.R.C., they can apply for an exchange of new label certificates.

All packaged food products intended for retail sale in China must have Chinese labeling printed on the package. When the shipment arrives, importers or exporters must show the label certificate to the Customs office. C.I.Q. will not inspect the shipment or samples without proper label certificate.

### 3. Phases of enforcement:

Phase 1: From Oct. 1, 2000, Import and Export Food Label Certificates are required for candies, nut products, meat products, flour products, honey products and egg products.

Phase 2: From Jan. 1, 2001, Import and Export Food Label Certificates are required for milk and milk products, soft drink, liquor, health products and frozen food products.

Phase 3: From Mar. 1, 2001, Import and Export Food Label Certificates are required for all imported and exported products.

### 4. Documents required for application:

- a) Three application forms;
- b) Explanation for label design and product materials;
- c) Explanation for label contents;
- d) Regulations of importing countries;
- e) Six label samples; if samples not available, proper photos should be submitted;
- f) Applicability of the product and its inspection method;
- g) Production and sales certificates for the products from the origin countries;
- h) All the other relevant documents;
- i) Product samples should also be provided when applying for label certificate.  
(Product samples could come in without a label certificate issued by C.I.Q. agency.)

### 5. Application fee:

The cost for each label application will be 300 RMB (approximately US\$36, using exchange rate of 8.265 RMB per U.S.\$1.00), including certificate. This charge will be different if a label needs special inspection.

### **Concerns:**

The importers and exporters attending the meeting raised some concerns about the labeling law. They feel that 90 days for application process is too long and would put Chinese businessmen in a less competitive position since timing is very important for business dealings. In order to pass the label requirement in China, they have to make adjustments to the labels, sometimes it is hard to meet the standards of the importing countries. Furthermore, they have to comply with the requirements of several government agencies before they could get approval of doing business in China. They often find themselves in an awkward situation when one agency requires certain document while the others don't.

Regarding the above concerns, the C.I.Q. officials promised that they will consider all the issues and if

possible, they will try to speed up the process and communicate with other agencies and C.I.Q. agencies of other countries to avoid conflicting requirements for labeling.

As for U.S. food exporters, it is highly recommended that they verify all set of import requirements with their Chinese customers before any products are shipped. They may need to prepare earlier now for any exports to the China market since the labeling law requires 90 days application processing lead time. In addition, more documents might be required than before for the label certificate.

Label application forms are available through Internet at [www.ciq.gov.cn](http://www.ciq.gov.cn).

**Contacts:**

The above information was provided to ATO/GZ by the Guangdong Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (C.I.Q.) on May 31, 2000.

C.I.Q. officials, Mr. Lu Zhi Ping, Deputy Director-General of C.I.Q. introduced the new system of labeling. Mr. Huang Fen, Deputy Director of C.I.Q. explained the purposes and procedures of the labeling process. For more information, contact ATO/GZ at [ato@gitic.com.cn](mailto:ato@gitic.com.cn).