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FAIRS Product Specific

Code of Practice on the Labeling of Alcoholic Drinks 2005

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Report Highlights:

The Hong Kong Government has released a Code of Practice regarding the Labeling of Alcoholic Drinks. This labeling guideline is provided to the trade for them to follow on a voluntary basis. Under the food labeling regulation, all alcoholic drinks with alcoholic strength exceeding 10 percent are exempt from all food labeling requirements. Alcoholic drinks with alcoholic strength between 1.2 percent and 10 percent are also exempted from all labeling requirements except the label must specify the durability. (Under the Dutiable Commodities Regulation, every container containing liquor for local consumption is required to be labeled with the alcoholic strength.)

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Hong Kong [HK1]
[HK]

The Hong Kong Government has released a Code of Practice on the Labeling of Alcoholic Drinks. This labeling guideline is provided to the trade to follow on a voluntary basis.

Background

In Hong Kong, the labeling of prepackaged food is governed by the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labeling) Regulations, Cap. 132 (the Regulations). In accordance with Schedule 3 of the Regulations, all prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labeled with the following information:

- (a) Name or designation;
- (b) List of ingredients;
- (c) Indication of "best before" or "use by" date;
- (d) Statement of special conditions for storage or instructions for use;
- (e) Name and address of manufacturer; and
- (t) Count, weight or volume.

(Under the Dutiable Commodities (Amendment) Regulation 2003, every container containing liquor that is imported into or manufactured in Hong Kong for local consumption is required to be labeled with the alcoholic strength, or the range of alcoholic strength.)

Currently, wines, liquor wines, sparkling wines, fruit wines, sparkling fruit wines and other drinks with an alcoholic strength by volume of 10 percent or more are exempted from the labeling requirements listed above except if any alcoholic drinks are marked or labeled with a list of ingredients, such list should conform in all respects with the requirements for listing ingredients. Drinks with an alcoholic strength by volume of more than 1.2 percent and less than 10 percent are also exempted from all labeling requirements except on the indication of durability on label.

Given that there have long been no statutory labeling requirements for alcoholic drinks, the current labeling format for such drinks are strictly on a voluntary basis and varies from brand to brand. The Hong Kong government therefore consulted the trade and published a code of practice in mid 2005 to let the trade follow voluntarily. This voluntary code of practice will be reviewed after one year of implementation, that is, mid 2006.

Code of Practice

(A) Name of Product

(1) In order to facilitate consumers to refer to by the name of an alcoholic drink, all drinks with an alcoholic strength of more than 1.2 percent as determined under section 53 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) shall be legibly marked or labeled with its name or designation. The name shall be in either Chinese or English or both languages.

(2) The name or designation shall not be false, misleading or deceptive in any respect as to the nature of the alcoholic drinks.

(3) If both the English and Chinese languages are used in the labeling or marking of the alcoholic drinks such as the name and address of manufacturer/packer, the name of the alcoholic drinks and the list of ingredients, if any, shall appear in both languages.

(B) Name and address of manufacturer or packer

(1) Drinks with an alcoholic strength by volume of more than 1.2 percent as determined under section 53 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) shall be legibly marked or labeled in either Chinese, or English or both languages with the full name and full address or details of the registered or principal office of the manufacturer or packer.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) shall not apply if -

(a) It is marked or labeled with-

- (i) An indication of its country of origins;
- (ii) The name of the distributor or brand owner in Hong Kong; and
- (iii) The address of the registered or principal office of the distributor or brand owner in Hong Kong; and

(b) the full address of the manufacturer or packer of the alcoholic drink in its country of origin has been notified in writing to the authority by the distributor or brand owner in Hong Kong.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) shall not apply if –

(a) it is marked or labeled with an indication of its country of origin and with a code marking identifying the manufacturer or packer in that country; and

(b) particular of the code marking and marking in that of the manufacturer or packer to whom it relates have been notified in writing to the authority by the manufacturer or packer or by the distributor or brand owner in Hong Kong.

(C) Indication of durability

According to the Amendment Regulations, drinks with an alcoholic strength by volume of more than 1.2 percent and less than 10 percent are required to be labeled with the durability. For wines, liquor wines, sparkling wines, fruit wines, sparkling fruit wines and other drinks with an alcoholic strength by volume of 10 percent or more, they are exempted from this requirement. However, if they choose to provide durability on label, such label shall be marked or labeled in accordance to the requirements laid down in paragraph 4 of Schedule 3 to the Amendment Regulation. The date marking shown in Arabic numerals shall be in the following format:

(a) the day shall be indicated by the words "DD", "dd", "D" or "d" in English lettering and in Chinese character;

(b) the month shall be indicated by the words "MM", "mm", "M" or "m" in English lettering and in Chinese character;

(c) the year shall be indicated by the words "YY", "yy", "Y" or "y" in English lettering and in Chinese character; and the day, month and year can appear in any order.