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Voluntary - Public

**Date:** 4/29/2010

**GAIN Report Number:** KS1012

## **Korea - Republic of**

**Post:** Seoul

### **Korea's Proposed Revision of Import Inspection Guidelines**

**Report Categories:**

WTO Notifications

**Approved By:**

Lloyd S. Harbert, Minister Counselor, U.S. Embassy

**Prepared By:**

Seung Ah Chung & Gerald Smith

**Report Highlights:**

The Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA) notified **G/SPS/N/KOR/359**, a proposed revision of Guidelines for Inspection of Imported Food Products and is gathering international comments until May 24, 2010. The proposal includes a new requirement for a testing certificate confirming that the product in question has not been irradiated.

**General Information:**

**Background:** The Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA) notified **G/SPS/N/KOR/359**, a proposed revision of Guidelines for Inspection of Imported Food Products for international comments on March 25, 2010. The Guidelines are used by KFDA's field officials for inspection of imported food products upon arrival. Minor changes have been made to the Guidelines but one notable change pertains to a new requirement for a testing certificate confirming that the product in question has not been irradiated (Article 8 of the Guidelines). Considering time, cost, and accuracy of irradiation testing and available eligible laboratories, this new requirement appears to be overly burdensome for domestic and international food producers.

Details about the irradiation test certificate requirement as follow:

- In accordance with KFDA's Labeling Standards for Foods, irradiated food products or food products containing irradiated raw materials shall carry an irradiation mark on the product label. KFDA made this labeling rule in 2007 with an implementation date of Jan. 1, 2010.
- Per the labeling standards, any product that has been irradiated or that contains irradiated raw materials "shall" have a designated irradiation mark on the product label starting from Jan. 1, 2010. However, KFDA has not fully implemented the new labeling requirement and is currently allowing a 6-month industry educational period until the end of June. Full implementation will start effective July 1, 2010.
- During this 6-month educational period, KFDA will monitor and test products to see how well industry is adhering to this upcoming new requirement.
- Listed in KFDA's Food Code - there is a list of 27 food products that the use of irradiation is permitted under certain dosages. KFDA will test these products to verify they have been irradiated.
- A list of 27 food products with permitted dosage is provided.
- To receive an exemption from irradiation labeling, importers/exporters need to prove that products in question have not been irradiated. As proof, KFDA is thinking about requiring a test certificate.
- Article 8 of the Import Inspection Guidelines is the relevant provision for this new requirement.
- A testing certificate should be issued by local laboratories recognized by KFDA or foreign laboratories (KFDA has not decided whether foreign laboratories are limited to the ones recognized by KFDA or not) establishing that a product or an ingredient in a finished product in question has not been irradiated.

**KFDA's Irradiation Standards**

- Source and type of radiation are  $\gamma$ -ray of  $\text{Co}^{-60}$ .
- Radiation is permitted only for the purpose of sprout inhibition, disinfestations, and microbial control of food and shall meet the following standards.
- Permitted 27 food products and their irradiation dosages
  - a. Fresh potato, onion, garlic: not more than 0.15KGy
  - b. Chestnut: not more than 0.25KGy
  - c. Fresh and dried mushrooms: not more than 1KGy
  - d. Egg powder, cereals, legumes and their powder as ingredient of food products, starch as ingredient of food products: not more than 5KGy
  - e. Dry meat, fish and shell fish powder, soybean paste powder, red pepper paste powder, soy sauce powder, dried vegetables as ingredient of food products, yeast and enzyme food, algae food, aloe powder, ginseng products (including red ginseng): not more than 7KGy
  - f. Dried spices and their formula, composite seasoning products, sauces, leaching teas, powdered tea, meals for patients requiring 2<sup>nd</sup> pasteurization: not more than 10KGy

### **Other Proposed Changes**

- To expand food products subject to distribution monitoring (Article 4)
- To adjust inspection items for foods subject to lab inspection (Article 9)
- To expand the scope of minor labeling violations (Article 11)
- To specify measures to be taken when non-compliant imported foods, etc. are re-imported (Article 12)
- To specify submission documents for the import notification of returned exports and foods, etc. for foreign currency acquisition, etc. (Article 14)
- To provide a list of agricultural/forestry products usable as Oriental medicinal products (Annex 1)
- To adjust pesticide residue inspection items (Annex 3)
- To adjust foods, etc. recognized by the KFDA Commissioner as safe among those foods, etc. without a history of non-compliance as determined by inspection (Annex 4)

**Comments:** KFDA is gathering international comments until May 24, 2010.

**Relevant Korean Text:** A full translation of the proposed standards is attached.