

Harmful Substances in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2021 to commence in phases today

A Government spokesman today (June 1) reminded the food trade and members of the public that the Harmful Substances in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2021 (the Amendment Regulation) comes into operation in two phases – the provisions stipulating the maximum levels of harmful substances in food have commenced today while the provisions relating to specifying partially hydrogenated oils (PHO), the main source of industrially produced trans fatty acids (IP-TFAs), as a prohibited substance in food, and the related marking and labelling requirement will be effective on December 1. The Amendment Regulation enhances the regulation of harmful substances such as industrially produced trans fats and mycotoxins in food with a view to further safeguarding food safety in Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Amendment Regulation updates and strengthens the regulatory control of three types of mycotoxins, i.e. aflatoxins, deoxynivalenol (also known as vomitoxin) and patulin, in food, as well as sets or updates the maximum levels for five other harmful substances (i.e. benzo[a]pyrene, glycidyl fatty acid esters, melamine, 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol and erucic acid) in edible fats and oils, condiments or formula products intended for infants. The provisions stipulating the maximum levels of these substances in food came into force today."

Moreover, to meet the World Health Organization's goal of eliminating IP-TFAs from the global food supply by 2023, and in line with one of the key measures under Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Disease in Hong Kong, announced by the Government in 2018, the Amendment Regulation will also impose a ban on PHO in the local food supply, so as to eliminate IP-TFAs at source to protect public health. The relevant provisions will come into operation on December 1.

Along with the Amendment Regulation, the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) (Amendment) Regulation 2021 stipulates that any prepackaged food containing hydrogenated oils, e.g. fully hydrogenated oil, must be indicated accordingly in the list of ingredients. It will commence on the same date as the provisions on banning PHO, i.e. December 1.

The spokesman reminded the trade to get prepared for the above new requirements. For details, please refer to www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/whatsnew_fstr_Food_Regulations_Harmful_Substances.html.