

Preservatives in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2024 commences today

The Preservatives in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2024 (Amendment Regulation) comes into effect today (December 30), updating food safety standards in relation to preservatives and antioxidants in food.

A Government spokesman said that the Amendment Regulation has updated the definitions of "preservative" and "antioxidant" with reference to the corresponding definitions adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The list of permitted preservatives/antioxidants has also been updated, and comprises 58 preservatives/antioxidants after the legislative amendments. The number of "additive-food" pairs with specified maximum permitted levels has increased from around 900 to around 2 000.

The spokesman added that to allow sufficient time for the relevant stakeholders to adjust to the new food safety standards and for local testing laboratories to establish the capability for performing relevant tests, as well as considering the longer shelf life of processed and pre-packaged foods that may contain preservatives or antioxidants, the commencement of the Amendment Regulation will be followed by a 24-month transitional period, which will end on December 29, 2026. During this period, it will be legal for any single food item to comply wholly with the requirements of either Cap. 132BD as it was in force immediately before the commencement date or Cap. 132BD as amended by the Amendment Regulation.

For details of the Amendment Regulation, please refer to www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/whatsnew_fstr_Proposed_Amendments_Preservatives_Food_Regulation.html. The Centre for Food Safety under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has issued updated user guidelines to facilitate the trade's compliance.