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General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods

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Report Highlights:

On May 13, China's Ministry of Health published on its web site National Food Safety Standard on General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods to be adopted on April 20, 2012. These Rules prescribe the basic requirements for the labeling of pre-packaged foods. They apply to the labeling of all pre-packaged foods directly or indirectly offered to consumers. A draft version of these rules was notified to the WTO on April 20, 2010 as TBT/N/CHN/733.

General Information:

BEGIN TRANSLATION

National food safety standard

General Rules for the labeling of prepackaged foods

GB7718-2011

Issued on April 20, 2011

Implemented on April 20, 2012

Issued by the Ministry of Health

Preface

This standard replaces the GB 7718-2004 General Rules for the labeling of prepackaged foods.

Compared with GB 7718-2004, main changes of this standard are as followings :

- Modification has been made to the scope of application;
- Modification has been made to the definitions of prepackaged food and date of manufacture, added the definition of configuration and cancelled the definition of storage period
- Modification has been made to the labeling method for food additives;
- Add to labeling method for configuration;
- Modification has been made to the labeling method for name, address and contact information of the manufacturer and distributor
- Modification has been made to the largest surfaces area of a package (container) of prepackaged food when the minimum size of the words, symbols and numerals in the mandatory labeling information shall not be less than 1.8 mm in height;
- Add to the recommended labeling requirement for the food which may contains allergies
- Modification has been made to the method of calculation for the largest surface area in appendix A
- Add to appendix B and appendix C

National food safety standard

General Rules for the labeling of prepackaged foods

1. **Scope**

This standard is applied to the labeling of prepackaged foods to be offered directly or indirectly as such to consumers.

This standard is not applied to the labeling of food package for transportation providing protection for prepackaged foods during transportation, labeling of foods in bulk and made as well as sold on the spot.

2 **Terms and definitions**

2.1 **Prepackaged Food**

Foods prepackaged in advance or made up with a measured quantity in a container includes foods prepackaged or made up in advance with a measured quantity in a container and have unified labeling of quality and volume within certain range.

2.2 **Food Label**

Food label means any words, pictorial, mark or other descriptive matter on the package or the container of food.

2.3 **Ingredients**

Any substance used in the manufacture or preparation of a food and present in the final product (including in a modified form), including food additive.

2.4 **Date of Manufacture**

The date on which the food becomes the final product includes packaging and filling date and it is also the final selling unit date after putting the foods into package (filling into containers).

2.5 **Date of Minimum**

Date of minimum durability (best before) means the date which signifies the end of the period under any stated storage conditions on the label of the prepackaged food during which the quality of the product will be maintained and the product will remain fully marketable and retain any specific qualities for which tacit or express claims have been made.

2.6 **Configuration**

Configuration means the descriptions of the relationship between total net weight and the units when prepackaged food contains more than one prepackaged foods.

2.7 **Principal Display Panel**

The panel easier to be found on package or containers of prepackaged foods

3. **Basic requirements**

3.1 Shall be in accordance with the requirements of laws and regulations, and the related food safety standard.

3.2 Shall be clear, prominent, indelible and readily legible by customers in purchase.

3.3 Shall be easily understood by the public, precise and supported by scientific evidence. Any indications, which are superstitious, pornographic, debasing other products, or unscientific, shall be prohibited.

3.4 Shall be true and accurate, and shall not be described or presented in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive; or is likely to create an erroneous impression by means of different word size or color contrast.

3.5 Shall not be described or presented by words, pictorial or other devices which refer to or are suggestive either directly or indirectly, of any other product with which such food or its certain property might be confused.

3.6 Shall not declare or imply contents with effect of prevention and curing of diseases, and non-health care

foods shall not be declared with the effect of health care directly or indirectly.

3.7 Shall not be separated from the foods or its package or container.

3.8 Shall be in normal Chinese characters (except registered trademark). Art characters of different kinds used for decorating must be written correctly and readily legible.

3.8.1 The Chinese pinyin or languages of minority ethnic groups may also be used at the same time, but the size of words shall not be larger than the corresponding Chinese characters.

3.8.2 In addition to Chinese characters, foreign languages may also be used corresponding to the Chinese characters (except the name and address of the manufacturer of the imported food; the name and address of the overseas distributor; and website address). The foreign letters shall not be larger than the corresponding Chinese characters (except for registered trademarks).

3.9 Where the largest surfaces area of a package (container) of prepackaged food is more than 35 cm², the minimum size of the words, symbols and numerals in the mandatory labeling information shall not be less than 1.8 mm in height.(the method of calculation for the largest surfaces area is referred to appendix A)

3.10 The package in a selling unit including different kinds of and several independent package can be sold independently, the foods labeling of each independent package shall be declared separately.

3.11 Where the outer wrapper is readily opened for labeling information distinguished or through an outer wrapper, the whole or part of the mandatory labeling information can be clearly distinguished in the inner package (or container), the same labeling information may not be repeated on the outer wrapper; Otherwise, the mandatory labeling information shall be labeled on the outer wrapper.

4. Labeling information

4.1 Labeling information of prepackaged food for direct delivery to consumers

4.1.1 General requirements

Labeling of prepackaged food for direct delivery to consumers shall include name of foods, list of ingredients, net weight and configuration, name of the food, address and contact information of manufacturers and/or distributors, date of manufacture and date of minimum durability, conditions for the storage, food production license number, code of the product standard and other contents needed to be labeled.

4.1.2 The name of the food

4.1.2.1 The specific name of the food shall be presented in the prominent place of the label, and shall clearly indicate the true nature of the food.

4.1.2.1.1 Where a name or several names have been established in respect of a certain food under a national, trade, or local standard, one of these names or an equivalent name shall be selected for use.

4.1.2.1.2 In the absence of any such name, either a common or usual name which is not misleading or confusing to the consumer shall be used.

4.1.2.2 A “coined”, “fanciful”, “transliterated”, “brand” name, “folk” name or “trade mark” is used, provided it in the same display panel one of the names provided in Section 4.1.2.1.

4.1.2.2.1 When a “coined”, “fanciful”, “transliterated”, “brand” name, “folk” name or “trade mark” contains misleading words or terminologies, a specific name which indicates the true nature of the food in the same word size, shall be used in close proximity to this name in the same display panel.

4.1.2.2.2 When a specific name, which indicates the true nature of the food, is misleading as to the nature of the food due to the different size of the words, the same word size shall also be used to indicate the specific name.

4.1.2.3 There shall appear on the label either before or after the name of the food, such additional words or phrases as necessary to avoid misleading or confusing the consumer in regard to the true nature, physical condition of the food, or method of preparation of the food; for example dried, concentrated, reconstituted, smoked, fried, powdery, granular.

4.1.3 List of ingredients

4.1.3.1 The labeling of the prepackaged foods shall declare the list of ingredients. A specific name shall be used for ingredients in the list of ingredients in accordance with Section 4.1.2 and name shall be used for food additives in accordance with Section 4.1.3.1.4.

4.1.3.1.1 “Ingredients” or “list of ingredients” is the marker words of the list of ingredients. If the raw materials used in the preparation process are converted into other ingredients (refers to the fermented products such as wine, soy sauce, vinegar), the “raw materials” or “raw materials and supplementary materials” may be used to substitute “ingredients” and “ingredients list”, and various raw materials, supplementary materials and food additives shall be indicated according to the related provisions in this standard. The processing aids need not be indicated.

4.1.3.1.2 All ingredients shall be listed in descending order of their weights added in the process of manufacture or preparation of the food; those ingredients constituting less than 2% of the food may not be listed in descending order.

4.1.3.1.3 Where an ingredient is itself the product of two or more ingredients (except compound food additives), such a compound ingredient may be declared, as such, in the list of ingredients, provided that it is immediately accompanied by a list, in brackets, of its primary ingredients in descending order of proportion. Where a compound ingredient (for which a name has been established in a national, trade or provincial standard) constitutes less than 25% of the food, its primary ingredients need not be declared.

4.1.3.1.4 The names of food additives shall be declared in general names in accordance with GB 2760. General names of food additives can be declared as the specific name of the food additives and also can be declared as their class names and declare the specific name and international code (INS Number) of the food additives at the same time(for the methods of declaration refer to appendix B). On the label of the same prepackaged foods, one form shall be chosen to declare food additives. When the form of declaring the class name and international code of food additives at the same time is adopted, and if some of the food additives does not have relevant international code or for the requirement of allergies, specific name of food additives can be declared. Names of food additives do not include their ways of making. Food additives in a compound ingredient constitute less than 25% of the food and if they are in accordance with bring-in principles stipulated in GB2760 and do not serve a technological function in the finished product, need not be declared.

4.1.3.1.5 Water added during preparation or processing of the food shall be declared in the table of ingredients. Water or other volatile ingredients evaporated in the course of manufacture need not be declared.

4.1.3.1.6 The edible package shall also be declared in the table of ingredients, except where stipulations of state laws and regulations provided otherwise.

4.1.3.2 The following food ingredient can be declared in accordance with Table 1.

Table 1

Ingredient classes	Labeling
Vegetable oils or refined vegetable oils,	“oil” together with either the term “vegetable”, or “refined”,

other than olive oil	qualified by the term “hydrogenated” or “partially-hydrogenated”, as appropriate
Starches, other than chemically modified starches	“starch”
All spices and spice extracts not exceeding 2% by weight either singly or in combination in the food	“spice”, “spices” or “mixed spices”, as appropriate
All types of gum preparations used in the manufacture of gum base for chewing gum	“Chewing Gum Bases”, “gum base”
All preserved fruits not exceeding 10% of the weight of the food	“Preserved fruit”, “preserved fruit ”
Food flavor, aroma	“Food flavor”, “ food aroma” “food flavor and food aroma”

4.1.4 Quantitative labeling of the ingredients

4.1.4.1 Where the labeling of a food places special emphasis on the presence of or adding one or more valuable and/or characterizing ingredients or components, the percentage of the emphasized ingredients added at the time of manufacture or the content of the emphasized components shall be declared.

4.1.4.2 Where the labeling of a food places special emphasis on the low content of one or more ingredients or components, the percentage of the emphasized ingredient or component in the final product shall be declared.

4.1.4.3 A reference in the name of a food to a particular ingredient or component shall not of itself constitute the placing of special emphasis.

4.1.5 Net Weight and Configuration

4.1.5.1 The net weight declaration shall be expressed using net weight, numerals and the official unit of measurement. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.5.2 The net weight of the packaged food shall be declared in accordance with the official unit of measurement, in the following manner:

- a) For liquid foods, by volume(L)(l), ml(ml)(ml),or use quality(g),kg(kg) ;
- b) For solid foods, by weight(g), kg ;
- c) For semi-solid or viscous foods, or use quality(g),kg(kg)or volume(L)(l), ml(ml)(ml)。

4.1.5.3 The unit of measurement for net weight shall be declared in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2

Measurement method	Range of net weight Q	Unit of measurement
Volume	Q < 1000 ml	ml (ml)
	Q ≥ 1000 ml	L (l)
Weight	Q < 1000 g	g
	Q ≥ 1000 g	kg

4.1.5.4 The minimum font size of net weight declaration shall be in accordance with Table 3.

Table 3

Range of net weight Q	Minimum height of font / mm
Q ≤ 50 ml ; Q ≤ 50g	2

50 ml < Q ≤ 200 ml ; 50 g < Q ≤ 200g	3
200 ml < Q ≤ 1L ; 200 g < Q ≤ 1 kg	4
Q > 1 kg ; Q > 1 L	6

4.1.5.5 The net weight and the name of the food shall be presented in the same display panel of the package (container).

4.1.5.6 In the case of a solid food packed in a liquid medium, the solid food is the main ingredient, in addition to the declaration of net contents, the drained (solid) contents shall also be declared, in weight or percentage. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.5.7 For prepackaged food containing small units of prepackaged food, in addition to the declaration of net weight, the configuration shall also be declared on the outer package, except for those the inner pack does not be sold as individual units, for example, bits of candies, packets of cookies, pouches of succade and so on.

4.1.5.8 The declaration of configuration consists of net weight of the prepackaged food and the number of inner individual food units, or only the number of inner individual food units, the word “configuration” may not be declared. For prepackaged food with no inner packs, the configuration means net weight. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.6 Name, address and contact information of the manufacturer and distributor

4.1.6.1 Name, address and contact information of manufacturer shall be declared. The name and address of manufacturer shall be registered according to laws and shall bear the responsibilities for safety and quality of products. In one of the following circumstances, the labeling shall be made according to the following requirement.

4.1.6.1.1 Any group company or its branch office (subsidiary) which by law bears independent statutory responsibilities shall have their respective name and address declared separately.

4.1.6.1.2 Any branch office or production facility of a group company which by law does not bear independent statutory responsibilities shall have the names and addresses of the group company and its branch office (production facility) declared; or only have the name, address and production facility of the group company declared. The production facility shall be declared to municipal region according to administrative divisions.

4.1.6.1.3 In the case of contract packer authorized to produce the prepackaged food, the name and address of the company that authorizes the contract packer and commissioned company shall be declared; or only have the name, address and production facility of the company that authorizes the contract packer declared. The production facility shall be declared to municipal region according to administrative divisions.

4.1.6.2 The contact information of manufacturer or distributor which by law bears independent statutory responsibilities shall be declared including at least one item in the following: telephone number, fax number, contact information on web and so on, or post address declared accompanied with address.

4.1.6.3 For imported prepackaged food, the country or region (Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan) of origin, and the name, address and contact information of the agent, importer or distributor registered in the People’s Republic of China, shall be declared. The declaration of name, address and contact information of the manufacturer may not be declared.

4.1.7 Date marking

4.1.7.1 The date of manufacture and the date of minimum durability shall be clearly declared. Where the date is indicated by making reference to a specific place of the package, this specific place of the package

shall be indicated. There shall be no pasted – over, supplement, or amendment to the declared date. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.7.2 For individually wrapped and prepackaged food units with date of minimum durability and freshness date declared contained in the same large prepackage, the date of minimum durability declared on the large prepackage shall be calculated by the earliest date of minimum durability of the individually wrapped and prepackaged food unit; the date of manufacture declared on the large prepackage shall be calculated by the earliest date of manufacture of the individually wrapped and prepackaged food unit or the date of the large prepackage made into selling unit; or the date of manufacture and the date of minimum durability of the individually wrapped and prepackaged food units shall be declared separately on the large prepackage.

4.1.7.3 The date coding shall be marked in the sequence of the year, month and day, otherwise the order of the date coding shall be declared. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.8 Conditions for the storage

Any special conditions for the storage of the food shall be declared on the label. (Refer to appendix C for declared form)

4.1.9 Food production license number

For the prepackaged food which needs to claim the food production license number, the declared form shall be in accordance with the relevant regulations.

4.1.10 Code of the product standard

4.1.10 The code and the order number of the product standard of the prepackaged food which is domestically produced and distributed (exclude imported prepackaged food) shall be declared.

4.1.11 Other labeling information

4.1.11.1 Irradiated foods

4.1.11.1.1 The label of a food which has been treated with ionizing radiation shall be marked “irradiated food” in close proximity to the name of the food.

4.1.11.1.2 Any ingredient which has been treated with ionizing radiation shall be declared in the table of ingredients.

4.1.11.2 Genetically modified foods

The labeling of the genetically modified foods shall be made in accordance with the regulations of the related laws and rules.

4.1.11.3 Nutrition label

4.1.11.3.1 Special diet food and principal and supplementary foods for infant and babies shall declare their nutrient components and weight, and declared form is performed according to GB 13432.

4.1.11.3.2 If the other prepackaged foods need to declare nutrient components, the declared form shall be performed according to related regulation standards.

4.1.11.4 Quality grade

If relevant standard of product performed by foods clearly specifies quality grade, the quality grade shall be declared.

4.2 Labeling information of prepackaged food distributed to the consumers indirectly

The name, configuration, net weight, date of manufacture, date of minimum durability and conditions for the storage of prepackaged food distributed to the consumers indirectly shall be declared on the label in accordance with the requirements as Section 4.1, and other information not declared on the label shall be declared in the specification or contract.

4.3 Exemptions from labeling information

4.3.1 The following prepackaged foods can be exempted from declaring the date of minimum durability: alcoholic beverages in which the alcohol content is 10% or over, vinegar, salt, sugar in solid form and monosodium glutamate

4.3.2 For prepackaged food, if the package or container of prepackaged food whose largest surface area is less than 10 cm² (The method of calculation for the largest surface area is referred to appendix A), the name of the product, net weight and the name and address of the manufacturer or distributor may only be declared.

4.4 Recommended labeling information

4.4.1 Batch identification

The batch number of the product identification may be declared according to the requirements of products.

4.4.2 Instructions for use

Instructions for use, like opening method, consumption method, preparation method, method of reconstitution and other instructions which are helpful for consumers may be declared according to the requirements of products.

4.4.3 Allergies

4.4.3.1 The following food and product may bring response of allergy, and readily legible name should be declared in the ingredient list or prompt accompanied with the ingredient list.

a) Grain and its product containing gluten protein (for example wheat, rye, barley, spelt or their crossbreeding products);

b)Crustacean animal and its products (for example shrimp, lobster, crab and so on);

b)Fish and its products

d)Egg and its products

e)Peanut and its products

f)Soybean and its products

g)Milk and dairy products (including lactose);

h)Nut and its products.

4.4.3.2 If the above food or its product may be introduced during processing, it shall be declared near the ingredient list.

5 Others

The labels of foods needed special examination and approval according to related state regulations shall be performed according to related regulations.

Appendix A

Method of calculation for the largest surface area of package (container)

A.1 Method of calculation for rectangular package (container)

In the case of a rectangular package (container), the product of the height (cm) of the side with the largest area times the width (cm) of that side.

A.2 Method of calculation for cylindrical or nearly cylindrical package (container)

In the case of a cylindrical or nearly cylindrical package (container), 40 percent of the product of the height (cm) of the container times the circumference (cm).

A.3 In the case of any otherwise shaped package (container), 40 percent of the total surface of the package (container).

If the package (container) presents an obvious “principal display panel”, the area of this “principal display panel” shall be used as the largest surface area.

For package bag and so on, when determining the surface area, the area of seal shall be excluded. In the case of bottle- shaped or can-shaped, when determining the surface area, the shoulders, necks, and the flanges at the tops and bottoms are excluded.

Appendix B

Declared form of food additives in the list of ingredients

B.1 Declare the specific names of all food additives in descending order of proportion

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, lecithin, PGPR, food flavor and lemon yellow), glucose syrup, propylene glycol ester of fatty acid, carrageenan, guar gum, annatto, malto dextrin and food aroma.

B.2 Declare the class names and international code of all food additives in descending order of proportion

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, emulsifier (322,476), food flavor, colorant (102)), glucose syrup, emulsifier (477), thickener (407,412), colorant (160b) malto dextrin and food aroma.

B.3 Declare the class names and specific names of all food additives in descending order of proportion

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, emulsifier (ecithin, PGPR), food flavor, colorant (lemon yellow)), glucose syrup, emulsifier (propylene glycol ester of fatty acid), thickener (407,412), colorant (carrageenan and guar gum), colorant(annatto), malto dextrin and food aroma.

B.4 Set up declared form accompanied with food additives item

B.4.1 General Principles

Food additives used directly shall be declared in the food additives item. Nutrition fortifier, edible flavors and gum base for chewing gum can be declared out of the food additive item in the list of ingredients. Food additives used indirectly shall not be declared in the food additives item. The declaring order of the food additives in the list of ingredients shall be included in total volume decision of various food additives of this item.

B.4.2 Declare specific names of all food additives

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, lecithin, PGPR, food flavor and lemon yellow), glucose syrup, food additives (propylene glycol ester of fatty acid, carrageenan, guar gum, annatto), malto dextrin and food aroma.

B.2 Declare all food additives in descending order of proportion

B.4.3 Declare the class names and international code of all food additives

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, emulsifier (322,476), food flavor, colorant (102)), glucose syrup, food additives(emulsifier (477), thickener (407,412), colorant (160b)), malto dextrin and food aroma.

B.4.4 Declare the class names and specific names of all food additives

Ingredient: water, whole milk powder, pouring cream, vegetable oil, chocolate (cocoa mass, sugar, cocoa fat, emulsifier (ecithin, PGPR), food flavor, colorant (lemon yellow)), glucose syrup, food additives (emulsifier (propylene glycol ester of fatty acid), thickener (407,412), colorant (carrageenan and guar gum), colorant(annatto)), malto dextrin and food aroma.

END TRANSLATION