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Taiwan GE Labeling Requirements Finalized with July 1 Implementation

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

Oilseeds and Products

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Report Highlights:

On May 29, 2015, Taiwan health authorities published the final version of labeling requirements for products containing genetically engineered (GE) inputs, implementation beginning July 1, 2015. The text of the notification was essentially in line with Post's anticipation and prior GAIN reports, except for the extension of the labeling requirements to restaurants.

General Information:

On May 29, 2015, Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare's Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) issued Public Notice: Food No.1041301628, the final version of labeling requirements for products containing genetically engineered (GE) inputs. The final version of these requirements is in line with Post anticipations and as reported in several GAIN reports, including GAIN TW15007 where a compromise between importers and Taiwan lawmakers is detailed. Implementation will begin July 1, 2015, a one-month extension from the previously reported June 1.

The May 29 notice included an unanticipated – though not completely surprising – change which expands the labeling requirements to local restaurants and catering establishments. Such restaurant level labeling requirements were similarly mandated when U.S. beef containing ractopamine residues was reintroduced into the market in 2012. Because of the local impact of such requirements, TFDA issued a pre-notice, Food No. 1041301013, for a 30-day domestic commend period. Proposed implementation date is also targeting December 31, 2015. Additional notifications or updates to the WTO, for instance, are not anticipated.

Additionally, there is no specific font size requirement stipulated for Non-GE product labeling. Non-GE labeling may be exaggerated with larger font size, for instance, whereas GE labeling must be noticeable by color, font, or background and must be at least 2mm by 2 mm.

With the new regulation, TFDA also published a short “Q and A” document which reports that food with intentionally added GE material must be labeled, no matter how low the level is, even if lower than the 3% threshold.

Violators of the GE labeling laws will be fined from NT\$30,000 (US\$1,000, approximately) up to NT\$3 million (US\$130,000, approximately) or from NT\$40,000 (US\$1,300) to NT\$4 million (US\$130,000) depending on which articles of Act Governing Food Safety and Sanitation applies. Business license could be revoked for serious violation.

Summary:

Taiwan's final GE labeling requirements for food and food additives are summarized as follows.

- **Highly Processed Food Products:** “Primary products” or those directly diverted from GE raw materials such as soybean oil, corn starch and syrup, and soy sauce are required to be labeled. “Secondary products” or those prepared with GE raw materials (i.e. primary products), such as corn syrup in beverages, will be exempted.
- **Non-GE labeling:** Products can only be labeled as “non-GE” if a GE alternative exists in the market or commercial chains. For instance, coffee is not eligible for non-GE labeling as there is not GE coffee being developed and commercialized.
- **Labeling font:** For GE labeling, font length and width must be no less than 2 mm and must be

noticeable by different color, font, or background.

- Labeling implementation timeline: The implementation date is December 31, 2015 for packaged food and food additives. However, labeling requirements for unpackaged food will be phased in three-part staged, starting July 1, October 1 and December 31, 2015.
 - a. July 1, 2015: Mandatory labeling of all GE raw materials (e.g. corn and soybeans) sold by registered commercial companies or market chain stores.
 - b. October 1, 2015: Mandatory labeling of processed GE food products (soybean milk, tofu, etc.) sold by registered commercial companies and market chain stores, and mandatory labeling of all GE raw materials (e.g. corn and soybeans) sold by vendors or retailers who are not required to register (i.e., other than registered commercial companies or market chain stores).
 - c. December 31, 2015: Mandatory labeling of GE unpacked or in bulk pack products, whether are in forms of raw material or processed and regardless who or where the products are sold, including small retail outlets, wet markets, street vendors etc.