



For Immediate Release

Slight amendment to food labelling scheme would help keep 15,000 healthier food products on Hong Kong shelves

*Consumers with heart conditions, diabetes and other medical
conditions would be affected by Government labelling scheme*

(29 April 2008, Hong Kong) In a press conference today, the Hong Kong Retail Management Association (“HKRMA”) proposed a slight amendment to the Government’s food labelling scheme that would help keep healthier products on supermarket shelves that would otherwise have been forced out from sale.

The amendment proposed by HKRMA would allow products that make nutrition claims to be included in the small volume exemption (which applies to products that sell less than 30,000 units per year), provided that the nutrition claims are true, not misleading and are scientifically substantiated.

Up to 15,000 healthier food products (“low fat”, “cholesterol-free”, “sugar-free”) affected by the scheme could remain on sale in Hong Kong if the HKRMA’s proposed amendment were adopted.

Mr Thomas Woo of the HKRMA said, “We fully support a nutrition labelling scheme for the protection of consumers in Hong Kong. However, we believe the scheme as currently proposed has unintentional consequences because of its unique nature which means food that is labelled in accordance with international standards will not be accepted in Hong Kong. While it may, at a cost to consumers, be economically viable to test and re-label products that sell more than 30,000 units per year, it will not be viable to test and re-label small volume products that make nutrition claims. Up to 15,000 of these healthier products will disappear from sale.”

“The legislation would not only force out existing products making nutrition claims,



HONG KONG
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香港零售管理協會

but also discourage new products with nutrition claims from entering Hong Kong,” Mr Woo added.

The Government’s scheme as it stands now would affect thousands of consumers in Hong Kong, including all those with heart disease and the 10% of Hong Kong people who suffer from diabetes, as well as those with other medical conditions. Because of the unique nature of the scheme, consumers will find it very difficult to find products that are labelled “cholesterol-free”, “fat-free” or “sugar-free”.

“In fact,” said Mr Woo, “foods that contain more fat, cholesterol, and sugar will replace products that are “fat-free”, “cholesterol-free” and “sugar-free”.

Anyone who appreciates the wide variety of international foods currently on offer in Hong Kong will also be affected, and this could damage Hong Kong’s reputation as a world-class international city.

“We urge the Government to adopt our proposed amendment to the scheme,” Mr Woo said. “By including products making nutrition claims within the small volume exemption, we will save up to 15,000 healthier products and allow Hong Kong consumers to continue enjoying healthier food choices.”

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For further enquiries, please contact:

Mr Charlie Wood

Tel: 2299 1956