

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FOOD REGULATIONS TO DELETE STANDARDS OF IDENTITY

Q1: Why is SFA proposing to delete the standards of identity? Is it not important for SFA to ensure that the food industry produces food of minimal quality such that consumers are protected?

A1: The proposed deletion of the standards of identity does not compromise food safety. All food products imported, manufactured and sold in Singapore must comply with prevailing food safety provisions, such as use of food additives and maximum limits for incidental constituents, as well as relevant labelling requirements.

A number of developments on the international and local front to establish standards of identity have taken place since the standards of identity were first developed in Singapore. On the international front, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has adopted many food commodity standards whilst on the local front, there are a number of Singapore Standards (developed under the Singapore Standards Council) for industry to take reference from.

In addition, removal of these standards of identity would allow for product innovation, which would otherwise be stifled if the industry continues to have to conform to a fixed standard of identity.

Q2: With the deletion of the standards of identity in future, can I still contact SFA to provide feedback on food products of poor quality?

A2: With the deletion of the standards of identity from the Food Regulations, industry can refer to available international standards (such as those of the Codex Alimentarius Commission) or the Singapore Standards. Consumers are encouraged to contact the importer/manufacturer/seller directly to provide feedback regarding issues such as taste, smell, appearance or composition of the food products. Consumers can still contact SFA to provide feedback on food safety matters, or regarding false or misleading claims on food products (refer to Q4 and Q5).

Q3: If the standards of identity are deleted, how will I know whether I can use a particular food additive in a food product when there is no longer a definition for the food product in the Food Regulations?

A3: SFA has plans, in future, to develop a food category system (with associated food category descriptors), to provide clarity to the industry regarding the food additive provisions. The food category system would be based on the Codex General Standard for Food Additives (CODEX STAN 192-1995). The descriptors for each food category will provide information on what are the types of food products that belong in the category, for e.g. "Yeast-leavened breads and specialty breads include all types of non-sweet bakery products and bread-derived products. E.g. white bread, rye bread, pumpernickel bread, raisin bread, whole wheat bread, *pain courant francais*, malt

bread, hamburger rolls, whole wheat rolls, and milk rolls.” SFA will work closely with the industry to develop the food category system with the associated descriptors.

Q4: If the standards of identity are deleted, how will I know whether the common name used for the prepacked food is acceptable when there is no longer a definition for the food product in the Food Regulations?

A4: SFA does not give approval on the use of product name or descriptor for prepacked food. The industry is responsible to ensure that the naming or product descriptor as labelled is accurate and sufficient to reflect the true nature and contents of the prepacked food product; and to ensure that the food does not carry claims or suggestions that are false, misleading or deceptive, or are likely to create an erroneous impression regarding the value, merit or safety of the food. SFA has the power to take regulatory action should there be non-compliance with the regulatory requirements.

Q5: If the standards of identity are deleted, how will I know whether a particular food product is what it claims to be, for example, virgin olive oil versus blend of vegetable oils, 100% fruit juice versus beverage made with fruit juice as one of the ingredients?

A5: The proposed deletion of the standards of identity does not compromise food safety. Food products must be properly labelled to indicate the true nature of their contents. SFA will take regulatory action in the case of unsafe foods, or if a food product carries claims or suggestions that are false, misleading or deceptive, or are likely to create an erroneous impression regarding the value, merit or safety of the food.