

# CHINESE MARKET REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS - RECENT INCIDENTS HIGHLIGHT THE BASICS

To protect consumers, all retailers and manufacturers of food and food contact products must ensure that contaminants are not transferred from containers, packaging or products otherwise in direct contact with foodstuffs, in quantities exceeding national and/or international regulations.

## CHINESE CONTAMINATION CASE

In recent news China's national quality watchdog and Hunan's provincial Bureau for Technical Supervision (BTS) announced that drinks from one of the country's biggest wine producers contained plasticizer in quantities far exceeding the national standard. The supplier and China's Alcohol Association confirmed that high levels of Dibutyl Phthalate (DBP) had been found, but they explained that this incident might have been caused by the migration of DBP from plastic containers and pipelines used in production and storage. Indeed, according to the producer and Association almost all of the country's white spirit products contain similar chemicals.

## PHthalATES & PLASTICIZERS

Plastic is the principal material in many common consumer products. Malleable and easily molded, plastic can be made softer, more transparent or more durable by the addition of plasticizers. They are used widely in industry and are already a part of our everyday life.

Phthalates, substances with a unique chemical structure and properties, are the most common plasticizers. They are associated with endocrine disruption and its effect on human reproductive and development disorder. Most countries, including China, restrict the use of phthalates in food contact articles. Relevant Chinese regulations include:

- Hygiene Requirements & Standards of FCM (Food Contact Material)
- Hygiene – Regulation of Food Safety
- FCM standards, for example: PE: GB 9687; PC: GB 13116;

Stainless Steel: GB 9684; Paper: GB 11680; Glass: GB 19778; Ceramic: GB 12651

## SIMILAR SAFETY CASES IN CHINA

Earlier in 2012, similar cases were reported. Some branded sports drinking bottles contained DBP exceeding national standards, and a famous dining brand was found to be selling products that contained manganese in excess of the GB (national standard) limits. Product recalls and safety scares have brought the use of chemicals in consumer products to prominence for China's shoppers. At the same time, high profile incidents such as those listed above mean that the Chinese government and quality watchdog are taking a keen interest in the market and increasing supervisory activity.

## CHINESE LEGISLATION FOR PRODUCT SAFETY & QUALITY

Since the 1990s China's government has been introducing and improving the country's product safety and quality legislation and supervision. Manufacturers and retailers are subject to legislation including:

- The Consumer Rights Protection Law of PRC, 1993
- The Law of Product Quality of PRC, 2001

These laws define the duties of producers, distributors and sellers to ensure the compliance of a product's safety and quality with China's national standards (GB). Some clauses abstracts from Law of Product Quality of PRC, 2001:

- Clause 13 - Products which may endanger the health or safety of

human life and property, must conform to the requirements of the relevant China standards

- Clause 26 - Products shall comply with the standard marked on the product or its packaging, and shall also demonstrate quality compliance by its description, display, etc.

During the last two decades, the market has seen these quality and safety standards implemented and increasingly supervised and verified. Consumer awareness too is on the increase, driving businesses to invest in product development and manufacturing improvements that improve product safety and compliance, as well as their own reputation.

## SGS SOLUTION

With an in-depth knowledge of China's product compliance legislation, an extensive lab network, testing capability for Chinese standards as well as food contact article experts across Mainland China and Hong Kong, SGS can help. Our clients benefit from legislation and standards consultancy, product testing, production and factory audits as well as support with maintaining brands in stores and hypermarkets with mystery shopping and spot check services.

Our one-stop solution helps ensure your products' compliance to Chinese law and standards, internal quality assurance (QA) and supply chain management, expedite the import process and help to build your brand image in China.

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