

For the purpose of giving considerations to the designing of new regulatory systems for food utensils, containers and packaging (UCP), etc., “the Committee for Reviewing the Regulations on Food Utensils, Containers and Packaging” has been formed. The Committee has deliberated on what a desirable regulatory system should be, including the introduction of a PL system and its legislation. However, smooth introduction of a PL system postulates environmental improvement, such as establishment of evaluation methods and operation systems in Japan and the gathering of a broad range of information on raw materials used in UCP. Needless to say, there are many issues involved with legislation, and the reviewing of them alone requires time. The Interim Report summarizes the issues towards introduction of a PL system and immediate measures that are considered practicable and important.

Background

- ◆ In Japan, no major health hazards associated with UCP have occurred thanks to the contribution by the UCP industry to secure the product safety through production management, in addition to the legal regulations for assessing substances identified to have safety risk and setting specifications and standards for them. However, contrary to the European Union and the United States where a PL system is applied to chemical substances used in UCP, Japan has not officially introduced a PL system. Therefore, Japan cannot immediately enforce regulations when a chemical substance that is banned from use in other countries is used in UCP in Japan or imported.
- ◆ To that end, the Committee investigated the actual regulatory situation in the European Union and the United States, the contents of production management by the industry groups in Japan, and deliberated on how chemical substances used in UCP should be controlled.

Summary of Issues on Legislation of PL system

(1) Chemical substances that shall be subject to risk management

Information on necessary matters, including the types and toxicity of chemical substances used in UCP, has not yet been gathered comprehensively.

(2) Information exchange among companies

There is a necessity for information on raw materials, etc. to be properly transmitted from companies manufacturing raw materials (upstream companies) to companies manufacturing the finished products (downstream companies).

(3) Proper production management by business operators and ensuring effective implementation

Based on the safety of raw materials of UCP and the amount of migration into food of chemical substances used for UCP, it is necessary for business operators to thoroughly implement proper production management. Additionally, it is necessary for the administrative bodies to confirm that management is appropriately implemented.

Responding to Issues and Considerations

(1) Chemical substances that shall be subject to risk management

- Gather and summarize a broad range of information on chemicals including the voluntary standards of the industry.
- Define the range of necessary information required for scientific evaluation.
- Review methods to ensure the amount of migration into food of chemical substance from the content in UCP.

(2) Information exchange among companies

- Conclude an agreement on the provision of information on the purchasing of raw materials to properly transmit information on chemical substances used in their products, while protecting trade secret.
- As a method to transmit the safety information of raw materials, use a method utilizing the certification system of the industry.

(3) Proper production management by business operators and ensuring effective implementation

- Have administrative bodies present guidelines on matters that business operators should work on.
- Carry out effective testing by developing analysis methods based on the latest international standards.
- Consider formulating a system to ensure effective implementation for imported products as well.

(4) Other

- Learn the status of PL systems in other countries, methods to handle imported products, facts on UCP, etc.
- If a PL system is introduced, there will be a necessity to give proper considerations on the protection of trade secret. Additionally, since the system will not allow the use of substances until they are listed, pay attention for the system not to pose a disadvantage in marketing of new products.

Immediate Measures

It is considered advisable to revise the current specifications and standards and newly establish specifications and standards for synthetic resins in response to technological advancement in UCP, and to promote the measure below in the view of introducing a PL system in the future.

- ◆ Formulate guideline for production management related to production management methods and information transmission for the purpose of further promoting production management by business operators. The formulated guidelines should be made public by the MHLW. It is advisable for the MHLW to compile a list of chemical substances subject to the voluntary standards of the Three Hygienic Associations and attach it to the guidelines as a reference.
- ◆ Collect and summarize domestic and overseas information on chemical substances to be subject to risk management, systems in other countries, information on relevant business operators, etc.
- ◆ Development of simplified methods to determine the amount of migration into food of chemical substances and define the range of data necessary for scientific evaluation.
- ◆ Promote the development of simultaneous analysis methods for commonly used additives and additives of safety concerns.