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Color & Comfort

Legislation – Food Packaging - Japan

For many years Japanese regulation of food packaging materials combined government regulations - pursuant to the Food Sanitation Law - and voluntary standards established by industry trade associations covering different material types, as a baseline for the safety of food-contact materials (FCM). However, to improve the sanitary regulation of utensils, containers and packaging (UCP) and ensure international consistency, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) intends to move from a negative list approach to a positive list system, whereby all substances are basically prohibited unless their safety has been assured and they are permitted to be used. MHLW has started this process by addressing "synthetic resins" (e.g., plastics), and in April 2020 published (Notification No. 196 of 2020) its **positive list** of substances used in synthetic resins for utensils, containers and packaging (UCP) in accordance with the implementation of the amended Food Sanitation Act, specifically Article 18(3). The list came into effect on 1 June 2020, when it replaced the previous regulatory scheme for food packaging materials for substances used in UCP. It comprises categories of polymers, monomers and additives. The change moved the country's regulation of FCM plastics under the Food Sanitation Law from a negative to a mandatory positive list system and came with a five-year grace period for industry to adjust.

The lists of permitted base polymers (plastics), base polymers (coatings, etc.), minor monomers, and additives are available on the MHLW website. Each individual polymer listing details the food types that may be contacted (e.g., acidic, alcoholic, fatty, etc.), the permitted temperature conditions of use, and any applicable limitations. The list of "base polymers (plastics)" details a total of 67 different base polymer categories, each classified among the 7 resin groups previously defined in the evaluation guidelines for food-contact "synthetic resins" published by Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ). For example, resin groups 5, 6 and 7 pertain to polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) resins, respectively. A migration limit of 0.01 mg/kg for synthetic resins that are not approved for use in utensils, containers and packaging listed under the Japanese Food Sanitation Act (not included on the positive list) has been determined as being a limit that is unlikely to harm human health (Notification No. 195 of 2020). In addition, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has published formal guidelines on Good Manufacturing Practice. The voluntary scheme will persist after the new positive list system for food-contact plastics takes effect, and separate positive lists for other materials are expected in the years to come.

The Japanese Printing Ink Makers Association (JPIMA) maintains a **negative list** of substances that cannot be used in printing inks for food packaging in Japan, and recently published an **update** including additional substances.

The information contained herein is based on data believed to be up-to-date and correct at the time writing. It is provided to our customers in order that they are able to comply with all applicable health and safety laws, regulations, and orders. In particular, customers are under an obligation to carry out a risk assessment under relevant Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in line with legislation and as a result take adequate measures to protect consumers.