

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT FOOD (AMENDMENT NO. Y) REGULATIONS 2022 (VETERINARY DRUG RESIDUES)

Posted on: 22 December 2022 | **Closing Date:** 20 February 2023

Aim

The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) is seeking feedback from the food industry, as well as interested parties on the draft Food (Amendment No. Y) Regulations 2022, which is targeted to come into effect in the first quarter of 2023.

Summary of amendments

The draft Food (Amendment No. Y) Regulations 2022 contains amendments to the Food Regulations, mainly to include a list of maximum residue limits (MRLs) for residues of veterinary drugs in food.

A detailed description of the proposed changes can be found in the **ANNEX**. The legal text of the amendments can be downloaded from SFA's website at:

<https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-information/public-consultation>
(Click on "Draft Food (Amendment No. Y) Regulations 2022 (Veterinary drug residues)" and "Consultation on Draft Food (Amendment No. Y) Regulations 2022 (Veterinary drug residues)").

Request for comments

SFA invites views and comments on the draft Food (Amendment No. Y) Regulations 2022. All submissions should be clearly and concisely written and should provide a reasoned explanation for any proposed revisions.

Submissions should reach SFA no later than 5:00 p.m. (Singapore time; UTC+8), 20 Feb 2023, through email, to the following address:
mohd_naim_mohd_ayob@sfa.gov.sg

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE FOOD REGULATIONS

(A) TO ALIGN DEFINITION OF “VETERINARY DRUGS” WITH CODEX AND SPECIFY MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS FOR RESIDUES OF VETERINARY DRUGS IN FOOD

1. SFA proposes to make amendments to the current definition of “veterinary drugs” in the Food Regulations to be in line with the definition used by the international food standards setting body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The proposed revised definition is:

“veterinary drug” means a substance applied or administered to a food producing animal (including a meat-producing or milk-producing animal, poultry, a fish or a bee) whether or not the substance is used for therapeutic, prophylactic or diagnostic purpose or for modification of physiological functions or behaviour.’

2. Regulation 33 of the Food Regulations which currently covers only three veterinary drugs (diethylstilbestrol, hexestrol and dienestrol) will be amended to provide for the enactment of a new Schedule to specify a list of maximum residue limits (MRLs) for residues of veterinary drugs in food. Application of veterinary drugs in livestock production is inevitable as they are essential for treatment of diseases. When veterinary drugs are administered to livestock, residual levels remain in the animal’s body, resulting in levels detected in the meat, organs and other produce from the animal.
3. In order to ensure that the levels of residual veterinary drugs present in food are safe, SFA has assessed the risk of the presence of low levels of veterinary drug residues in various food commodities, and established MRLs for specified veterinary drugs. SFA has referenced MRLs established by Codex and/or major developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, the European Union and the United States in our assessment.

(B) TO ADOPT CODEX DEFINITION FOR “ANTIMICROBIAL AGENT” IN PLACE OF EXISTING DEFINITION FOR “ANTIBIOTICS”

4. SFA proposes to replace the term “antibiotic” and its accompanying definition in Regulation 32 with the term “antimicrobial agent” and its definition, which is consistent with the definition adopted by Codex.

<u>Current Regulation 32</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Antibiotic residues 32.— (1) In these Regulations, “antibiotic” means any chemical substance, produced either by chemical synthesis or by a micro-	Residues of antimicrobial agents 32.— (1) In these Regulations, “antimicrobial agent” means any substance of natural, semi-synthetic or synthetic origin that when administered to a living organism,

<p>organism which in low concentration has the capability to inhibit the growth of or to destroy bacteria and other micro-organisms.</p> <p>(2) Subject to paragraph (3), no person shall import, sell, advertise, manufacture, consign or deliver, any milk, meat and meat products, or any article of food intended for human consumption which contains detectable antibiotic residues or their degradation products.</p>	<p>kills or inhibits the growth of bacteria, fungi, viruses and other microorganisms.</p> <p>(2) A person must not import, sell, advertise, manufacture, consign or deliver any article of food that contains any detectable residue of an antimicrobial agent or a degradation product of the antimicrobial agent unless —</p> <p>(a) the antimicrobial agent is a veterinary drug; and</p> <p>(b) the import, sale, advertising, manufacture, consignment or delivery is in accordance with regulation 33.</p>
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5. Antimicrobial agents are used in food animal production for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases. However, the misuse and overuse of antimicrobial agents can cause public health issues. It is recognised that the use of antimicrobial agents along the food chain may result in exposure to antimicrobial resistant microbes (including bacteria) or their resistance genes in the food production environment.
6. A number of antimicrobial agents are also veterinary drugs, hence SFA will specify that unless the antimicrobial agent is a veterinary drug that is regulated under the new Regulation 33, there must not be detectable residues of the antimicrobial agent or its degradation product in food.

(C) TO MAKE CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE PROVISIONS ON NISIN

7. Provisions for nisin, currently housed within Regulation 32 on antibiotics, will be retained, but shifted to Regulation 19 on preservatives. This is purely a housekeeping measure.
8. Nisin is a mixture of closely related antimicrobial polypeptides produced by strains of *Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *lactis*. Scientifically, nisin belongs to a class of antibiotics known as “lantibiotics” which are produced by a large number of Gram-positive bacteria. Nisin has been historically grouped together with antibiotics in Regulation 32. However, Codex and the major developed countries have adopted provisions for the use of nisin as a food additive (with the technological function of preservative) and not an antibiotic, because as an additive nisin is directly incorporated into food matrices and not fed to the animals. Nisin is mainly used in dairy and meat products, inhibiting pathogenic foodborne bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and many other Gram-positive food spoilage microorganisms.

9. With the proposed deletion of the existing Regulation 32, SFA intends to retain the provisions for nisin and considers it appropriate to shift the provisions for nisin to Regulation 19 on preservatives.

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