

FSIS Delays Effective Date of New Meat Labeling Regulations

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Responding to a letter from eight trade associations asking for more time to prepare for compliance, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), an agency within the Department of Agriculture, has decided to delay the effective date of final regulations requiring nutrition labeling for major cuts of single-ingredient raw meat and poultry from January 1, 2012 until March 1, 2012. The regulation also mandates that ground or chopped products bearing a “lean percentage statement” include a statement of fat percentage if they do not meet the criteria to be considered “low fat.”

In its preamble to the final rule, FSIS indicated its intention to conduct meetings and webinars on the final rule in advance of its effective date to facilitate compliance. Specifically, FSIS stated that it would provide examples of notices to be used at the point-of-purchase (POP) which would satisfy the labeling mandates for single-ingredient raw meats and also include examples of acceptable labels for ground or chopped products. The agency noted that it had provided such guidance, and additionally held numerous public meetings to answer questions about the rule’s requirements.

However, in their August 12, 2011 letter to the FSIS, eight trade associations cited the agency’s delay of one or two months in making such information available as the basis for their request that FSIS exercise enforcement discretion for a six month period following January 1, 2012, the rule’s initial effective date. While FSIS conceded some delay, it noted that postponing the regulation’s effective date two months would provide ample time for industry to ready for compliance. FSIS indicated that it could provide approval of any labels submitted prior to January 1, 2012 before the regulations became effective. Additionally, the agency explained that it would continue to conduct education and outreach activities to assist in compliance in advance of the new March 1, 2012 effective date.

The notice was published in the Federal Register on December 9, 2011 and is available [here](#).

This post was written by [Donnelly McDowell](#).