

Consumers to be armed with quality codes

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BEIJING - Chinese consumers will be able to check the authenticity of products with new quality codes to come into effect before the end of June.

The measure, beginning with 69 kinds of major commodities, will allow the identification of fake and substandard items through free phone number, the Internet or special enquiry terminals in shops and supermarkets, said the country's quality watchdog on Monday.

The commodities included food products, home appliances, power/cable lines, agricultural tools, gas burners, work safety equipment, electric blankets and cosmetics, said the General Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine.

Consumers would be able to acquire information, including the name of producers and production and expiry dates, by free inquiry calls, by tapping in a series of digits.

Once unqualified products were detected, information would be transmitted to a supervisory network, which would inform other distributors of the same batch of products and stop sales.

Chen Xiaoying, an official in charge of the promotion of the supervisory network, said 30,299 producers were registered with the network and 700 million products had been labeled with codes by January 16.

She said large supermarkets in Beijing such as the Wu-Mart were testing the network.

Chinese authorities had been frustrated by substandard China-made products both on domestic and overseas markets.

The quality watchdog said on Wednesday it had arrested more than 1,480 people in a four-month nationwide crackdown on substandard goods, part of ongoing efforts to calm international worries over the quality of the country's products.

It said the arrests were the result of 1,187 criminal investigations nationwide into the manufacture and sale of fake or substandard food, medicine or agricultural products that started in August.

Sixty-four people were arrested in 13 major cases, including fake drug albumin from human plasma and substandard vaccines for blue ear pig disease.

During the campaign, the authorities closed more than 300 drug manufacturers, and destroyed or returned 168 batches of illegally imported or substandard pork, fruit and materials. It also set up quality files covering 33,000 consumer goods producers and put more than 10,000 enterprises into the country's quality-monitoring network.

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