

China publishes draft regulation on food safety

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China's new draft food safety law, which lays out penalties from fines to life in prison for makers of substandard food, was published on the national legislature website on Sunday for public discussion.

Members of the public are being invited to make recommendations and submissions on the draft published at the National People's Congress (NPC) website, www.npc.gov.cn.

The draft law, covering food safety evaluation, monitoring, recall and information release, was submitted to the NPC Standing Committee in December last year for the first hearing.

According to the draft, producers of substandard food products face fines, the confiscation of their incomes and revocation of production certificates. In serious cases, they could face prison terms ranging from three years to life.

The solicitation of public opinion will last till May 20. Submissions will then be delivered to the NPC Standing Committee for further study. A schedule for its legislative progress has yet to be set.

Chinese industries have come under the spotlight of domestic and foreign consumers with concerns about substandard products or tainted food over recent years, which sometimes led to international disputes in addition to poisoning or even deaths.

Food-related incidents, in particular, included vegetables with pesticide residue, fish contaminated with suspected carcinogens and eggs tainted with industrial dyes.

This is the first draft law made public by the 11th NPC since it held its first annual session in March this year.

China's top legislator Wu Bangguo promised in March to give the public more say in the formulation of the food safety law, amid both domestic and international concerns about the country's food quality and safety.

According to an official with the General Office of the NPC Standing Committee, the drafts of major laws regarding the country's reform and development will be published on the NPC website to allow the public to make submissions and recommendations before they are passed.

Draft laws concerning the interests of the people will also be published via major news media in the country.

Once the drafts are published, people can send their comments directly to the Legislative Work Committee of the NPC Standing Committee, or to its official website.

The decision was intended to expand the public's participation in politics, the official said. (Xinhua)

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