

China adopts law to strengthen food safety control, vows to punish offenders

National advisory body to discuss int'l challenges

BEIJING, Feb. 28 (Xinhua) -- China's top legislature approved the Food Safety Law on Saturday, providing a legal basis for the government to strengthen food safety control "from the production line to the dining table."

The law, which goes into effect on June 1, 2009, will enhance monitoring and supervision, toughen-up safety standards, recall substandard products and severely punish offenders.

The National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee gave the green light to the intensively-debated draft law at a four-day session, following a spate of food scandals which triggered vehement calls for overhauling China's current monitoring system.

Winning 158 out of the 165 votes, the law said the State Council, or Cabinet, would set up a state-level food safety commission to oversee the entire food monitoring system, whose lack of efficiency has long been blamed for repeated scandals.

Departments of health, agriculture, quality supervision, industry and commerce administration will shoulder different responsibilities.

These would include risk evaluation, the making and implementation of safety standards, and the monitoring of the food production and circulation sectors.

The law stipulated a ban on all chemicals and materials other than authorized additives in food production, saying that "only those items proved to be safe and necessary in food production are allowed to be listed as food additives."

Health authorities are responsible for assessing and approving food additives and regulating their usage.

Food producers must only use food additives and their usage previously approved by authorities, on penalty of closure or revocation of production licenses in serious cases, according to the law.

Producers of edible farm products are required to abide by food safety standards when using pesticide, fertilizer, growth regulators, veterinary drugs, feedstuff and feed additives. They must also keep farming or breeding records.

Offenders could face maximum fines which would be 10 times the value of sold products. If businesses are found producing or selling a substandard foodstuff, consumers can ask for financial compensation which is 10 times the price of the product. That's in addition to compensation for the harm the product causes to the consumer.

To better protect consumer rights, the law bans food safety supervision and inspection agencies, food industry associations and consumers' associations from advertising food products.

Individuals or organizations are prohibited from advertising substandard food products. Those advertising such products would face joint liability for damages incurred.

The law has been revised several times since it was submitted to the NPC Standing Committee for the first reading in December 2007. In April 2008, it was opened to public scrutiny and more than 11,000 comments were made to the lawmaking body.

Chinese lawmakers review food safety, insurance, criminal laws

BEIJING, Feb. 25 (Xinhua) -- China's State Council, or Cabinet, will set up a food safety commission to strengthen the country's food monitoring system, whose lack of efficiency has long been blamed for repeated food scandals.

The decision was written in a draft law on food safety, which was submitted to the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, China's top legislature, on Wednesday and is likely to be voted on Saturday after a fourth reading. [Full story](#)

China to set up central food safety commission

BEIJING, Feb. 25 (Xinhua) -- China's State Council, or Cabinet, will set up a food safety commission to strengthen the country's food monitoring system, whose lack of efficiency has long been blamed for repeated food scandals.

The decision was written in a draft law on food safety, which was submitted to the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, China's top legislature, on Wednesday and is likely to be voted on Saturday after a fourth reading. [Full story](#)

China's draft law on food safety to undergo 4th reading

BEIJING, Feb. 17 (Xinhua) -- The draft Law on Food Safety will have its fourth reading by lawmakers next week after being removed from the agenda of China's top legislature in December.

Members of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee will discuss the draft law at an upcoming bi-monthly session scheduled from Feb. 25 to 28, according to a statement issued after a meeting of the chairman and vice-chairpersons of the NPC Standing Committee on Tuesday, presided over by chairman Wu Bangguo. [Full story](#)