

**For discussion
on 9 June 2026**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Proposed Amendments to the
Sweeteners in Food Regulations (Cap.132U)**

Purpose

The Government plans to consult the public on the proposed amendments to the Sweeteners in Food Regulations (Cap.132U) (“the Regulations”). This paper outlines the proposed amendments and firstly seeks Members’ views.

Background

2. Sweeteners are food additives that impart a sweet taste to food in place of sugars. Like other food additives, sweeteners are permitted for use only after stringent safety evaluations that demonstrate they are fit for consumption. The Regulations stipulate that no person shall sell, consign, deliver or import any food containing sweeteners, except the ten permitted sweeteners listed in the Schedule (see Annex).

3. The Environment and Ecology Bureau and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have reviewed the Regulations, and considered that there is a case for amendments having regard to the prevailing international standards established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)¹ (i.e. the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA)²) and Mainland standards. The review has also taken into account the dietary habits and intake of local population as well as the practices of other major food trading partners of Hong Kong. The objectives are to better protect public health and harmonise with international standards. The proposed amendments are supported by the CFS’ Expert Committee on Food Safety, which comprises

¹ Codex is an international body established in 1963 by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme to develop food standards for protecting consumers’ health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. World Trade Organization also names Codex as the standard-setting organisation for food safety.

² The GSFA is formulated by Codex. Only substances determined safe for use as food additives would be considered for inclusion in the GSFA, which is revised from time to time in light of updated scientific information, risk assessment, changing technological developments and justifications for use.

local, Mainland and overseas academics/experts as well as local trade stakeholders and representatives from Government departments.

Latest Developments and Proposed Amendments

4. The latest international developments observed during the review and our proposed amendments are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

(1) To bring polyhydric alcohols under regulatory scope

5. Polyhydric alcohols (also known as sugar alcohols) have been widely used as sweeteners (for example, xylitol and sorbitol are commonly used in chewing gums and sugar-reduced food) and some also occur naturally in food³. The scope of the existing Regulations does not include polyhydric alcohols. Considering that the GSFA, the Chinese Mainland and various major food trading partners of Hong Kong have covered polyhydric alcohols in their standards, we propose to amend the Regulations to bring polyhydric alcohols under our regulatory scope.

(2) To expand the list of permitted sweeteners

6. If polyhydric alcohols are to come under the Regulations, we propose adding ten types of polyhydric alcohols⁴ covered by the GSFA to our list of permitted sweeteners in the Regulations such that food containing these sweeteners and meeting our standards may continue to be sold in Hong Kong. In addition, a sweetener namely advantame⁵ has been added to the GSFA. We also propose adding advantame to our list of permitted sweeteners in the Regulations as well, thus allowing any food with advantame levels complying with our standards to be sold in Hong Kong. This would offer more safe choices for both the trade and the public.

7. Following the above, we propose amending the Schedule to the Regulations to increase the number of permitted sweeteners from currently ten to 21 (see **Annex**).

³ For example, peaches naturally contain sorbitol, while mushrooms naturally contain mannitol.

⁴ Namely, erythritol, isomalt (hydrogenated isomaltulose), lactitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, polyglycitol syrup, mannitol, sorbitol, sorbitol syrup, and xylitol.

⁵ Advantame is a new generation of sweetener, with high sweetness intensity of approximately 20 000 times sweeter than sucrose.

(3) To specify the requirements for individual “sweetener-food” pairs

8. The Regulations currently only specify a list of permitted sweeteners, whereas the GSFA sets maximum levels for different sweeteners across various food categories. Following our comprehensive review and drawing reference to international practices, we propose to refine the standards for using various sweeteners in different kinds of food based on the food category system in the GSFA. This will enhance the protection of public health, and is in line with our approach in regulating preservatives and antioxidants.

9. The aforementioned GSFA food category system contains various “sweetener-food” pairs. For instance, “neotame-frozen fruit” and “neotame-candied fruit” are two distinct pairs. A maximum permitted level (MPL), say, in terms of the maximum amount (in milligrams) of a sweetener permitted per kilogram of food, is prescribed for each pair. While we will primarily adopt Codex standards, they do not cover certain Chinese food items common in Hong Kong (such as Chinese candied fruits). Mainland standards will be adopted in such cases.

10. Meanwhile, the GSFA permits the use of 11 types of sweeteners⁶ that are generally safe in accordance with “Good Manufacturing Practice” principles (“GMP principles”) in certain kinds of food, i.e. the quantity applied shall be limited to the lowest possible level necessary to achieve its intended effect. We propose to regulate these 11 sweeteners in accordance with GMP principles under the Regulations in a similar manner.

11. In sum, we propose to specify the MPLs for over 900 “sweetener-food” pairs in the Regulations. About 80% of these are based on Codex standards and the remainder of about 20% are based on Mainland standards. Details of these 900+ pairs will be set out in the public consultation document.

(4) Other amendments

12. In line with our recent amendments to food additive standards and international practices, we propose to make other amendments to the Regulations, including –

⁶ Namely, thaumatin, erythritol, isomalt (hydrogenated isomaltulose), lactitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, mannitol, polyglycitol syrup, sorbitol, sorbitol syrup, and xylitol.

- (a) to adopt “carry-over principle”: some kinds of food are prepared with two or more ingredients (such as yoghurt with cereals). The MPLs of sweeteners in such food will be determined based on the proportion of individual ingredients used and their respective corresponding MPLs;
- (b) to exempt any naturally present sweetener component: if a sweetener is a naturally present component in a food, such natural content will be exempted. Sweeteners that are artificially added to that food remain subject to the Regulations; and
- (c) to update the Chinese names of sweeteners: the Chinese names of certain permitted sweeteners currently in the Regulations will be amended to align with those in the GSFA and Mainland standards⁷.

Facilitating the Trade’s Adaptation to New Standards

13. The CFS has collected food samples from the local market to analyse their sweetener content. Among some 900 tests conducted, about 98% were in compliance with the proposed MPLs. We are confident that the food trade can adapt to the proposed amendments. To facilitate preparation by the food trade and private laboratories for compliance, we propose to provide an 18-month transitional period⁸ following completion of the legislative procedure for the subsidiary legislation to amend the Regulations.

14. The Government plans to consult the public and the trade on the proposed amendments to the Regulations within this year. We will consider the feedback received in details, and prepare the subsidiary legislation to amend the Regulations for tabling at the Legislative Council for scrutiny. The CFS will also conduct technical meetings for the trade and issue user guidelines to facilitate the trade in understanding and complying with the new requirements.

⁷ The Chinese names of acesulfame potassium, alitame, aspartame, aspartame-acesulfame salt, steviol glycosides and sucralose will be amended as 「乙酰磺胺酸鉀」, 「阿力甜」, 「阿斯巴甜」, 「阿斯巴甜-乙酰磺胺鹽」, 「甜菊糖苷」 and 「三氯蔗糖」 respectively.

⁸ During the transitional period, full compliance with the requirements of either the Regulations before amendment or the amended Regulations shall fulfill the statutory requirements.

Advice Sought

15. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and offer views on the proposed amendments to the Regulations.

**Environment and Ecology Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Centre for Food Safety
June 2026**

**Sweeteners in Food Regulations (Cap.132U)
Existing and Proposed Additional Permitted Sweeteners**

Existing Sweeteners	Proposed Additional Sweeteners
1. Acesulfame potassium*	11. Erythritol
2. Alitame*	12. Isomalt (Hydrogenated isomaltulose)
3. Aspartame*	13. Lactitol
4. Aspartame-acesulfame salt*	14. Maltitol
5. Cyclamates	15. Maltitol syrup
6. Neotame	16. Mannitol
7. Saccharins	17. Polyglycitol syrup
8. Steviol glycosides*	18. Sorbitol
9. Sucralose*	19. Sorbitol syrup
10. Thaumatin	20. Xylitol
	21. Advantame

* With reference to GSFA and Mainland standards, the Chinese names of acesulfame potassium, alitame, aspartame, aspartame-acesulfame salt, steviol glycosides and sucralose will be amended as 「乙酰磺胺酸鉀」, 「阿力甜」, 「阿斯巴甜」, 「阿斯巴甜-乙酰磺胺鹽」, 「甜菊糖苷」 and 「三氯蔗糖」 respectively.