

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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New Regulation on Food and Drinks for Institutions

Report Categories:

Trade Policy Monitoring

Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and
Standards - Narrative

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Report Highlights:

A new Ministry of Agriculture and Food regulation on supply of food and drinks to children at kindergartens, schools and other institutions hosting children was published in early November. The regulation introduces stringent requirements to food and drinks consumed or sold at these institutions and mandatory supply of dairy and meat products produced in compliance with the Bulgarian government standards. This is estimated to lead to an advantaged market position for some food manufacturers and to limit consumption of imported products even if they are “healthy”.

General Information:

New Regulation for Foods and Drinks at Children Institutions

On November 3, a new amended regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Foods (Amendment to Regulation #9 of 2011 published in Official Gazette #85 of November 3, 2015)

<http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp;jsessionid=90AFE1A2A9DBA068335F60339E6FBE4D?idMat=98274> was introduced.

The regulation implements stringent requirements to food consumed and/or sold at kindergartens and schools as well as for food offered to children at events, during school vacations etc. The regulation provides a year of grace period for the full introduction. It stipulates requirements on food delivered by catering or other suppliers to schools as well as to foods sold in retail at school kiosks, café, canteens etc. Foods produced from or containing bioengineered products are banned (Art. 5). Extruded foods (for example, chips, snacks or chocolate spreads) are prohibited (Art.25). Foods containing trans-fat oils are banned (Art.11). Dairy and meat products should be produced based on local standards (so called Bulgarian Government Standards-BGS), while some other foods such as bread, sunflower oil and vegetables cans should be produced based on industry standards (Art.12/2, Art.14 and art.22/4). No other oils and fats with the exception of cow milk butter, sunflower oil, and olive oil, can be sold or consumed.

The most significant difference between the current amendment of the regulation and its previous version is that to date the suppliers of food at children institutions had an option to choose if they could supply food produced under the standards or not. Now this choice is eliminated.

Industry Reactions

Since its first adoption in 2011, the above regulation has been a subject of debates. Opponents argue that the requirements to foods are not based on any clear health criteria, and that children can buy and consume all “banned” foods at any time at home or at the closest to the school retail or food service outlet. There has been criticism as well that this regulation manipulates the food market by motivating higher production of foods produced under government standards which are usually more expensive but have no clear justification of being healthier or better in quality.

Since the introduction of these standards on the market in 2011 and initially high consumer interest, sales have drastically declined and only few food manufacturers still supply such food on the market. Media survey carried out in the summer showed a very limited number of companies producing foods under BGS (Regal Magazine, June 2, 2015). For example, the Food Safety Agency register lists 82 companies producing bread and flour under BGS, however, the bakers’ industry group claimed there were only 12 manufacturers as of June 2015. The register lists 69 producers of meat products under BGS while the Association of Meat Producers information lists only 17. Similarly, there were 40 listed dairy manufactures while companies actually producing dairy items under BGS were 25.

These select suppliers will be in an advantaged position under the new regulation which causes a concern for the industry. Finally, the regulation limits sales and/or consumption of imported products at

institutions hosting children even if they are “healthy”.

End of Report