

Unifying the organic processed food management system in Korea

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) announced that it will unify its organic processed food management systems beginning January 1, 2014. Until now, the organic processed foods are managed by the “certification system” according to the Environmentally Friendly Agriculture Fosterage Act which is managed by Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the “marking system” of the Food Sanitation Act which is managed by Ministry of Food and Drug Safety. Therefore consumers often have difficulties in clearly understanding the characteristics of these two systems. In order to prevent consumers from being confused and to manage organic processed foods more systematically, the government will abolish the “marking system” and use only the “certification system”.

Accordingly, in principle, makers must obtain certification according to Korean certification standards in order to distribute and sell organic processed food with the “Organic” mark in the domestic market. However, a “mutual equivalence agreement” may be signed with countries that run a certification system equivalent to the Korean one, and organic processed foods from such countries may be distributed and sold in the domestic market in the same way as products certified in Korea.

Meanwhile, MAFRA estimates that if it takes a long time to sign such agreements with major importing countries, it would hinder the smooth supply and demand of raw materials of organic processed foods. For this reason, the government has also established measures to address this problem. First, on November 1, 2013, the ministry began to enforce the Notification of Types of Foreign Organic Processed Foods Permitted by Confirmation of Standard Suitability, which allows the use of organic processed raw materials with foreign certification by separately designating raw material foods required for supply and demand, such as the one not domestically produced. In addition, MAFRA also requested that the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety amend regulations in order to allow organic processed foods imported based on the “marking system” by December 31, 2013, to be distributed until they pass their expiration date. The Korean government expects that unifying organic processed food management systems will prevent consumers from being confused and enable the supply of safe and reliable organic processed foods.

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