



December 14, 2006

Director
Regulations and Rules Division
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
P.O. Box 14412
Washington, D.C. 20044-4412

Attention: Notice No. 62, Food Allergen Labeling of Alcoholic Beverages

Dear Director:

The Center for Science in the Public Interest wholeheartedly supports TTB's Interim Rule on food allergen labeling of alcoholic beverages, and we commend the agency for moving forward with a proposed rule to make such labeling mandatory, while at the same time providing an opportunity for alcohol producers to petition for appropriate exemptions for particular ingredients. We look forward to the rule's adoption at the earliest possible opportunity.

We view the agency's current action to expand consumer label information as an important victory for consumers, a significant contribution to public health, and as an initial step toward providing alcohol consumers with a wide range of other important label disclosures. Certain alcohol producers have sought to delay implementation of the rule, based on inconclusive evidence that certain processing agents pose no risk of allergic reactions. We note that the exemption process proposed in the rule – essentially that followed by the Food and Drug Administration today – is the precise means to resolve such questions, and we strongly urge TTB not to delay implementation of the rule based on such industry arguments, which could be unending. We concur with the technical comments offered by the American Dietetic Association (Comment 9, September 25, 2006) regarding the placement, type size, presentation, and consumer testing of label designs, and recommend that, to the extent possible, the allergen disclosures follow the format mandated by the FDA for food labels.

Allergen disclosures, which represent a portion of the consumer information CSPI has sought for more than 30 years, would implement the stated purpose of section 105(e) of the Federal Alcohol Administration Act: to “provide consumers with adequate information as to the identity and quality of the products ...” they use. Other disclosures, which relate to numerous other health and safety concerns surrounding the use of alcoholic beverages include: calories, alcohol content, serving size, number of servings per container, government advice on low-risk alcohol consumption, and the ingredients in the final product.

We urge the TTB to move quickly to propose and implement rules covering the broader range of label requirements for alcoholic beverages. Such labeling would provide significantly more consumers with important information relevant to health and safety concerns connected to their consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Hacker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being the most prominent.

Benjamin Cohen
Senior Staff Attorney

George A. Hacker
Director
Alcohol Policies Project