

New 1996 Labelling Regulations

On January 24, 1996, the Government of Mexico published three major new labelling regulations. They included a new generic labelling law, that will replace the March 7, 1994 Executive Decree, as well as new regulations for textiles and apparel as well as for food and non-alcoholic beverages. All three regulations are revisions of drafts that had been published earlier and that had been the subject of public consultation.

Most of the provisions are slated to go into effect on November 1, 1996. However, their exact status remains unclear because the implementation process has been delayed several times in the past. Some of the provisions of the January 24 regulations include provisions that were objected to by both Mexican and foreign companies. The following sections describe the general thrust of the new provisions — but they are not definitive.

Generic Products

The new regulations include the final revisions of a new *norma*, official standard, *NOM-050-SCFI-1994*, which outlines the minimum commercial information that must be provided on product labels. The new rules will apply to all products not covered by another *NOM* or regulation.

Under the new rules, Spanish-language labels will have to be “included from origin” and they must be affixed so they will not come off under normal conditions. This will formally eliminate the practice of affixing Spanish stickers to English labels. The labels may include other languages as well, and must meet metric system requirements. There is also a new provision that the name and address of the producer must be included on the label.

The most important changes in the proposed rules are requirements for instructions and warranties. The instructions may be on the label or in a separate booklet, and there must be an accompanying notice advising the consumer to read the instructions. These must include instructions for use and assembly, if applicable.

Warranties must be in accordance with the *Ley Federal de Protección al Consumidor*, Consumer Protection Act. They must also specify the location of service centres in Mexico. During the term of warranties, manufacturers or importers will be required to replace “any damaged piece or component” free of charge. Instructions, manuals and warranties must be “incorporated to the product” before sale, but they will not be required for customs clearance.