

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO
THE NATURAL MINERAL WATER, SPRING WATER AND BOTTLED
DRINKING WATER (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN
IRELAND) 2009

2009 No. 260

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 1.2 The Statutory Rule is made under Articles 15(1), 16(1), 25(1)(a) and (3), and 47(2) of, and paragraph 1 and 4(b) of Schedule 1 to, the Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.
- 1.3 The European Council has allowed only 20 days for the recast Directive 2009/54/EC to come into force from the date of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. Therefore, in order to ensure the continued enforceability after its coming into force date of all requirements relating to natural mineral water contained in SR 2007 No. 420, the amending Statutory Rule will therefore breach the 21 day rule.

2. Purpose of the Rule

- 2.1 This Statutory Rule amends the Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (SR 2007 No 420).
- 2.2 The existing Statutory Rule implements all existing European legislation relating to natural mineral water, spring water and bottled drinking water (Directives 80/777/EEC (as amended), 98/83/EC and 2003/40/EC). Directive 80/777/EEC has been consolidated in Council Directive 2009/54/EC, necessitating amendments to the Statutory Rule which replace references to a previous Directive with references to the recast Directive.

3. Legislative Background

- 3.1 The Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations 2007 transposed the requirements of European Directives 80/777/EEC (as amended by 96/70/EC), 98/83/EC and 2003/40/EC. These Regulations lay down requirements for the exploitation, bottling,

labelling or other marking and sale of natural mineral water, spring water and bottled drinking water. Limits are set for certain chemical and microbiological parameters in the water to ensure the quality and safety of bottled water.

- 3.2 European Directive 80/777/EEC on natural mineral water, which was amended by Directive 96/70/EC to encompass spring water, has been replaced with a single recast Directive 2009/54/EC. This recast Directive is essentially a consolidation, although with some amendment of the procedures for developing new detailed rules for natural mineral waters in EC Countries. As a result of the adoption of the recast directive, references in national legislation to Directive 80/777/EEC need to be replaced so that the legal requirements concerned can continue to be enforced. The opportunity is also being taken in the amending Statutory Rule to correct the drafting of certain provisions of the 2007 Statutory Rule and an error as to a date in a provision of those Regulations giving effect to a derogation in Directive 80/777/EEC (and the recast directive), which allows transporting water from a spring to a separate bottling plant by tanker.
- 3.3 The recast Directive 2009/54/EC permits the introduction of new treatments for natural mineral water and spring water by way of future Commission Directives or Regulations.

4. Parity or Replicatory Measure

- 4.1 This Rule applies to Northern Ireland only. Parallel legislation is being made in each of the other countries of the United Kingdom.

5. European Convention on Human Rights

- 5.1 As this rule is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

6. Policy background

- *What is being done and why*

- 6.1 In 2008, bottled water accounted for 14.8% of the total UK soft drinks market (by volume) and had a retail value of £1,497 million. This industry is controlled by the Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations 2007.
- 6.2 European legislation in general is currently going through a process of consolidation of Regulations and Directives that have been amended several times, to ensure clarity.

The 2007 Statutory Rule makes several direct references to the previous European Directive 80/777/EEC when setting out the requirements that must be complied with, and these references need to be updated to refer to the new Directive 2009/54/EC. In addition, a couple of drafting shortcomings are resolved by the amending Rule (poor subparagraph layout and clarifying text on the requirement for absence of some micro-organisms from natural mineral water and spring water during marketing). Also, Directive 96/70/EC allows a derogation permitting tankering of spring water from a spring to bottling facilities where such tankering was permitted in the Member State before the “time of notification” of this Directive. The UK had hitherto understood that this time was 23 November 1996. However, the recast Directive 2009/54/EC has made clear that it was in fact 13 December 1996. This change is reflected in the amending Statutory Rule. Some translation corrections were also made to the English text of the recast Directive and where necessary these changes have been mirrored in the amending Statutory Rule.

- ***Consolidation***

- 6.3 As the amending Statutory Rule does not change the substance of what is required by the existing legislation, the 2007 Regulations have not previously been amended and there is a limited timescale to implement the recast directive, it was decided not to consolidate those Regulations on this occasion.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 A 6-week public consultation was carried out on an earlier draft of the Regulations in August. No Impact Assessment (IA) was included as the new legislation does not make any notable changes to the existing requirements applicable to producers. The consultation concluded on 26 September 2008. No responses were received in Northern Ireland.
- 7.2 The translation corrections were identified in the English text of the recast fairly recently and after the above consultation had taken place. The main trade associations were briefly contacted on this and they have not raised concerns over these changes. A letter was sent to interested parties on the 30 April 2009 explaining how these corrections change the draft Statutory Rule. No comments were received.

8. Guidance

- 8.1 No new guidance is provided as this will not change any requirements contained in the existing Statutory Rule. Existing Guidance will be updated with corrected references to European Directives, dates, etc.

9. Equality Impact

- 9.1 These regulations will apply in equal measure to all Section 75 groups. It is not expected that any of these changes will impact differentially across any of the section 75 groups.

10. Impact

- 10.1 The impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies is considered to be negligible.
- 10.2 The impact on the public sector is negligible.
- 10.3 An Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this rule.

11. Regulating small business

- 11.1 The legislation applies to small businesses.
- 11.2 The legislation makes no changes to existing requirements on producers, small or large.
- 11.3 The basis for the final decision to take no specific action to assist small businesses was that there is no change to the existing requirements for any business.

12. Contact

Mervyn Briggs at the Food Standards Agency NI, Tel: 028 9041 7742,
Email: mervyn.briggs@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or

Esther Chartres, Tel: 028 9041 7737
Email: esther.chartres@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

