

WORKSHOP REPORT

Interamerican Workshop on Packaging and Labeling

9–10 December 2001

Miami

Technical Standards Activities Program (TSAP)

Interamerican Metrology System (SIM)

NIST's Technical Standards Activities Program (TSAP), Office of Weights and Measures, and its Global Standards and Information Program worked with Mr. Cesar Luis da Silva, Chairman of the Legal Metrology Working Group (LMWG) of SIM to present a two-day Interamerican Workshop on Packaging and Labeling in Miami on December 9–10, 2001. More than 50 participants from the Americas and Europe attended the Workshop and shared a wide variety of information on labeling requirements and packaging experiences.

One of the projects the three offices cooperated on for the Workshop was a Survey of Labeling Requirements of the SIM member states. Among the information collected were the various requirements of the member states for declaring the net quantity, identity, and responsibility on packages intended for consumers. The first draft of the survey was discussed at the meeting and additional efforts will be made to ensure all of the information is up to date and complete so that the survey results can be posted on the SIM web site.

One of the significant issues discussed at the meeting involved the use of the comma and the period as decimal markers in net quantity declarations. Some countries (including the USA) want to permit either to be used so that manufacturers do not have to maintain different packaging for each market, but many countries want to permit only the comma to be used as the decimal marker. The pros and cons of each approach were exhaustively discussed but no agreement could be obtained. One position was that the comma is specified as the decimal marker in SI; therefore, it was not necessary to discuss this point since the LMWG recommends that the SI system of measurement be used. Another comment was that a recent discussion at the BIPM indicated that the decimal point might be

recognized there as the preferred decimal marker symbol (for English language publications). A further comment reported that both the comma and the period are in use and should be allowed, since to reject package labels on this one point would disrupt trade. One participant suggested that the LMWG could not recognize both the comma and the period because it would be inconsistent with the recommendation to use SI. BIML Director Jean-François Magaña reported that Europe encourages the use of SI, but understands that flexibility is needed. He stated that the BIPM suggest that both the comma and the period be accepted as decimal markers. Further efforts to resolve this issue will be made at future meetings of the LMWG.

The SIM Legal Metrology Working Group held a meeting immediately following the Workshop and issued the following resolutions and decisions:

Packaging and labeling

The LMWG agreed to:

- Encourage each OIML Member State to adopt OIML International Recommendations R 79 and R 87 and collaborate in their revision. The LMWG encouraged the OIML to consider procedures for small lot sizes and packages with low counts.
- Recommend that information required on package labels be in the language of the country in which the product is sold.
- Simplify the net content statement on packages. For example, only the measurement units that are relevant to the consuming market need to be translated into that country's language.
- Encourage exclusive use of the SI System for package labeling.
- Ask SIM for financial support to develop and provide training programs on labeling subjects (e.g., metrication, net content testing procedures and labeling requirements of OIML R 87 and OIML R 79).
- Recommend that a project be undertaken to identify and suggest standardization of reference temperatures used to determine the net quantity of contents of liquids in the Americas.
- Request that SIM create a database containing each country's legal metrology regulations (e.g., labeling, net contents testing, contact information, etc.) and that it be made available on the Internet.
- Solicit, update, correct and complete the P&L survey responses of each country in their region so the survey can be posted on the SIM web site. This work should be finalized by March 1, 2002.

Other Items

The LMWG also agreed to:

- Request that SIM create a list server for discussion of issues on the SIM web site for the LMWG to exchange information, establish priorities for harmonization, and other purposes.
- Establish an ongoing forum for industry to bring labeling issues and problems to the SIM LMWG for discussion and possible resolution (e.g., harmonization of requirements or ensuring full disclosure). SIM LMWG representatives will coordinate through e-mail or personal contacts to develop the issues and bring the information to the Group for further discussion and resolution. It was also agreed that the sub regions of SIM implement the above resolutions on a local basis. ■

Technical Standards Activities Program

US participation in OIML activities is coordinated by Dr. Charles Ehrlich, Chief of the Technical Standards Activities Program (TSAP) at NIST.

If you would like to learn more about these activities, please visit the TSAP web site at <http://ts.nist.gov/oiml>

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