JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Singapore introduces industry standard to guide sales of food products on online platforms to ensure food safety

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1 Singapore Standard (SS) 687: 2022 (Guidelines for food e-commerce) was launched at the Singapore Manufacturing Federation's Singapore Innovation and Productivity Institute (SIPI) Food Tech 2023 event today to provide guidance to e-commerce players on their roles and responsibilities related to food safety and providing information to consumers. Announced by Ms. Grace Fu, Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, the standard covers key stages, best practices, and activities critical for the food e-commerce industry to ensure the safety of food products sold via online platforms.

2 The standard was jointly developed by a multi-stakeholder Working Group comprising Food Industry Asia (FIA) and the Singapore Food Agency (SFA), in partnership with the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) and various industry players such as local food e-commerce platforms, food delivery platforms, and supermarket retailers. The Working Group was appointed by the Singapore Standards Council (SSC), overseen by Enterprise Singapore (EnterpriseSG).

Singapore Standard (SS) 687 on Guidelines for food e-commerce

3 Online purchases of food products and food delivery services in Singapore have grown over the past few years, due to improved accessibility and convenience of online platforms, coupled with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic which pushed more consumers and businesses to take their transactions online. In 2021, approximately 2.5 million

consumers used online food delivery platforms to purchase their food products in Singapore, a 14% increase as compared to 2020[1].

4   Currently, different food e-commerce and delivery platforms have varying practices in ensuring traceability, safety and transparency of the food products that are sold through them. As more Food Business Operators (FBOs) move their sales activities to such platforms, there is a need to have a common understanding of industry best practices for the management of online sales of food products, so that FBOs can provide consumers with greater assurance on the reliability of their food products and services.

5   By implementing this standard, **FBOs such as online food businesses/sellers, e-commerce platform providers and food delivery companies** may gain greater clarity in:
   a) The respective roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders throughout the different stages of the food e-commerce supply chain.
   b) The standardisation of information to be displayed at points of sale and delivery.
   c) Responsibilities of food traceability and recall mechanisms.
   d) Ownership of managing potential exigencies such as consumers' complaints, food safety incidents or food recalls.

6   The standard also aims to improve **end consumers'** experience in the following areas:
   a) Improve the online food purchasing experience for end consumers by strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of food e-commerce platforms and FBOs.
   b) Improve food safety by encouraging each stakeholder within the food e-commerce supply chain to conduct the necessary due diligence through the proper implementation of food safety practices as part of their operations (e.g., displaying food product information online, standardised food traceability and product recall procedures, etc.)

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[1] Based on Statista report: https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1183610/users-online-food-delivery-singapore#statisticContainer

7   SMF President Mr Lennon Tan, said, "As e-commerce platforms have quickly become a key avenue for the purchase of food products, this standard will provide consumers with greater confidence. Therefore, we are pleased to be able to play a part in contributing to the development of the standard through our members in the Food & Beverage Industry Group to ensure food is delivered safely even through online means. I believe that the standard will provide companies with recommended guidelines that can be implemented in business models."

8   Dr Tan Lee Kim, Director-General, Food Administration and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Food Agency, said "Food safety assurance needs to be built on a strong foundation of educating businesses and consumers of their responsibilities. The publication and adoption of this standard would elevate industry standards and guide food business operators to achieve better transparency, traceability and accountability when selling food online. Additionally, consumers would be empowered to make better informed purchase decisions by buying from businesses that have implemented these practices and have greater food safety assurance."

9   Ms Choy Sauw Kook, Director-General (Quality & Excellence), Enterprise Singapore, said, "The standard complements existing food safety standards, by providing guidelines that are specific to the safe handling and sales of food products online. The new standard provides clear guidelines on the respective roles and responsibilities for FBOs, food e-commerce platform providers and food delivery companies during different stages of the food e-commerce supply chain. It will also improve food traceability and recall mechanisms to improve the online ordering experience for end consumers."

10   Mr Matt Kovac, CEO, Food Industry Asia (FIA), said, "Singapore has swiftly responded to the rapid rise in the adoption of food e-commerce by consumers through the development of the standard. The standard is a fantastic achievement, which demonstrates the collaborative efforts of industry across the supply chain as well as the public sector. It will provide Food Business Operators with a practical set of voluntary e-commerce guidelines that can be applied to enhance current processes in order to ensure food safety whilst importantly not stifling innovation. Singapore is the first country to develop such a comprehensive set of voluntary guidelines, and hence the standard could be utilised by other authorities to help inform best practices for industry."

11   SS 687 on Guidelines for food e-commerce can be purchased from the Singapore Standards eShop at www.singaporestandardseshop.sg.

About the Singapore Manufacturing Federation

Established since 1932, the SMF represents the interest of the manufacturing community in Singapore, driving its competitiveness and sustainable growth through serving industry-specific needs. Supported by 10 industry groups and its Associated Services, the SMF enhances the competitiveness of the industry by encouraging capacity development and capability building, innovation and productivity. The SMF provides opportunities for companies to collaborate, network, and to grow and expand both locally and internationally. Current membership stands at about 5,000 members comprising SMEs, MNCs and Affiliate members. For more information, please visit www.smfederation.org.sg.

About Singapore Standards Council

The Singapore Standards Council (SSC) facilitates the development, promotion and review of Standards and Technical References in Singapore. This work is done through partnerships with the industry, academia and government organisations, under the national standardisation programme overseen by Enterprise Singapore.

About Food Industry Asia (FIA)

FIA was founded in July 2010 by seven of the world's largest food and beverage companies, and has now grown to nearly 50 companies across the supply chain. FIA's mission is to represent the food and beverage industry in Asia, promoting a climate for sustainable growth and serving as a regional knowledge hub for science-based research and advocacy.

FIA's work cuts across the connected areas of smart regulation and safe food; health, nutrition and innovation; as well as sustainable and resilient supply chains. FIA plays a critical role in building trust between the industry and the public sector through the development and deployment of science-based policies and regulations.

For more information on FIA, visit https://foodindustry.asia/.

About the Singapore Food Agency (SFA)

As the lead agency for food-related matters, the Singapore Food Agency's mission is to ensure and secure a supply of safe food for Singapore. SFA works hand-in-hand with the industry and consumers to grow our three "food baskets" –Diversify import sources, Grow local, and Grow overseas, as well as ensure food safety from farm-to-fork. SFA also partners food businesses to strengthen capabilities, tap on technologies to raise productivity, undertake research to develop new lines of business, and catalyse industry transformation to ensure food security.

For more information on SFA, visit www.sfa.gov.sg.

Annex A – Information on SS 687:2022 Guidelines for food e-commerce

Singapore Standard 687:2022 was prepared by the Working Group, which is overseen by the Food Standards Committee under the Singapore Standards Council.

The intent of SS 687 is to define industry best practices to ensure food safety of food sold through the internet/ e-commerce channels. The standard provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities related to food safety that are expected of food e-commerce chain players such as online food businesses/sellers, online platform providers and logistics service providers.

It covers recommended practices that are related to food safety in the following areas of the food e-commerce chain:

(a)   Food business/seller onboarding process;
(b)   Point of food e-commerce sale;
(c)   Last mile delivery;
(d)   Point of food delivery; and
(e)   Traceability and food product recall

FBOs, food e-commerce platform providers and food delivery companies can follow the food safety recommendations in these guidelines which are relevant to their operating models and activities. By implementing these guidelines, FBOs may gain greater clarity in the following areas:
−   The respective roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders throughout different stages of the food e-commerce chain.
−   The types of information (e.g., proper food product labelling, standardised food traceability and product recall procedures, etc.) to be displayed at the point of e-commerce sale and at the point of delivery.
−   Traceability and product recall mechanism (e.g., proper documentation of food handling and processing, steps on food product recall, etc.).

<u>Working Group members</u>
Amazon Singapore, Asian Culinary Institute, Barilla Singapore Pte Ltd, Deliveroo Singapore Pte Ltd, DFI Retail Group, Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited, Food Industry Asia, foodpanda Singapore, FrieslandCampina Singapore, Grab Singapore, GS1 Singapore Limited, Kellogg Company, Lazada Singapore, McCormick & Company, Inc, Nestlè Singapore Pte Ltd, NTUC Fairprice Co-operative Ltd, Qoo10 Pte Ltd, Sealed Air (Singapore) Pte Ltd, Shopee Singapore, Singapore Food Agency, Singapore Manufacturing Federation Food & Beverage Industry Group, Singapore Retailers Association