

Revision of the Specifications and Standards of Food Contact Articles and the Future Movement

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The “specifications and standards of food contact articles” was revised by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Notification No.201 (31 March, 2006). This revision mainly involved the test methods in order to exclude harmful reagents, to improve their analytical precision and to simplify their procedures. Carbon tetrachloride was removed, thus the tests for dibutyl tin compounds, vinylidene chloride, etc., were changed to new methods. The polarographic method using mercury was also deleted. For the metal analysis, graphite furnace atomic absorption spectrometry and the inductively coupled plasma spectrometry were introduced and the sensitivity for metals improved. Therefore, the concentration procedures were skipped and the test methods for antimony and germanium were changed from colorimetry to instrumental analyses. For the migration test of the evaporation residue for plastic utensils, their food simulant was changed from 4% acetic acid to the selection from 4 simulants corresponding to contact foodstuffs. Moreover, the content of standard solutions and the limit of the specifications were clearly stated, thus the “specifications and standards of food contact articles” became easier to understand. In addition, an equivalent or better method can be used instead of the official method. The problems of food contact article regulation are still discussed in study groups of the Health Labour Sciences Research, which included the migration limits of cadmium and lead from ceramics, the lead content in metal utensils, the migration test conditions, etc. The “specifications and standards of food contact articles” should be revised corresponding to social changes.