

October 15, 2002

The National Institute of Standards and Technology  
Weights and Measures Division  
Laws and Metric Group  
100 Bureau Drive MS 2000  
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-2000

Dear NIST,

I will not be able to attend the November 7 meeting about efforts to change labeling laws to allow metric-only labeling, so I would like to submit these comments for your consideration instead sharing them in person.

I support efforts to legalize metric-only labeling. I don't represent a corporation, but I am a consumer. As a result, I can probably best comment on how the proposed changes will affect consumers. Here are some things to point out if anyone has reservations about metric-only labeling.

First, many labels will be simpler and easier to read without the old units. The metric units on labels are expressed in a clear, concise format. For example: 1.5 L; 500 mL. The same quantities can be expressed in a variety of ways in the customary units, sometimes spanning lines.

Example: a 500 mL bottle is often labeled in several different ways:

1 pint, 0.9 fl. oz.  
16.9 FL OZ, or  
1.06 PT

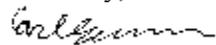
Often, this quantity is given in several formats on the same label. My mother, who is quite familiar with the customary system, was very confused by a label that mixed pints and ounces in the net contents statement, and which spanned three lines. The label had the same quantity listed several ways.

Second, consumers will not be overly burdened by dealing with metric labels. All of the products will already have metric quantities on their labels, allowing consumers to compare different brands. In most grocery stores, the shelf tag gives the price per ounce, which also helps comparisons. Ultimately, consumers will learn the new system, and they will probably learn it better than they knew the old one.

Third, consumers will find cheaper products if U.S. companies are more efficient. Making it easier for companies to produce products and labels for a world market can only help.

I hope we can change the laws to allow metric-only labeling soon.

Sincerely,



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