

WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES

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HARMONIZED SYSTEM COMMITTEE

23rd Session

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Brussels, .

CLASSIFICATION OF BAKERS' WARES (WAFFLES)

(item IX.35 on Agenda)

I. BACKGROUND

- 1. On 20 January 1999, the Secretariat received an enquiry from the Japanese Customs Administration concerning the classification of "**Kellogg's® Breadia**", bakers' wares (a kind of "waffles"), made from wheat flour (20-30 %), oat bran (5-10 %), fat (soya bean oil) (5-10 %), sugar (1-2 %), dried whey (1-2 %), dried egg white (0.5-0.9 %), salt (0.1-0.5 %), vitamins and water (40-50 %). After being baked, the product is quick-frozen in a blast freezer and exported. Before consumption, the waffles have to be heated in an oven for 2 minutes (see the Annex for illustration).
- 2. The issue under dispute is whether the product should be considered "waffles and wafers" classified in subheading 1905.30, or whether it would be more appropriate to classify the product in subheading 1905.90 ("other").
- 3. According to the Japanese Administration, the product could <u>not</u> be classified in subheading 1905.30 as "waffles and wafers", since the water content was higher than 10 % (10 % or less by weight is allowed according to the Explanatory Note to heading 19.05, Item (A) (9)).
- 4. The manufacturer, however, took the view that this limit did not apply to all the waffles and wafers of item (A) (9), but only to the products mentioned in the sentence preceding the sentence "The water content must be 10 % or less by weight of the finished product." In the manufacturer's view, there would be no products classifiable as waffles in the HS, according to the Japanese interpretation of the Explanatory Note in question.
- 5. In its telefax message of 17 February 1999, the Secretariat informed the Japanese Administration that it took the view that the above-mentioned "10 % or less by weight" provision applied to all the waffles and wafers of subheading 1905.30. If this provision should apply only to some of the products mentioned in item (A) (9), a demarcation line between the different waffles and wafers had to be established in order to apply different water content limits.

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6. The Secretariat emphasised that the HS <u>legal</u> texts did not provide clear criteria for making a distinction between subheadings 1905.30 and 1905.90 as to the classification of wafers and waffles with a higher water content than 10 %. The Secretariat, therefore, proposed to submit this question to the Harmonized System Committee for consideration. In its telefax message of 26 February 1999, the Japanese Administration agreed to the Secretariat's proposal.

II. SECRETARIAT COMMENTS

7. The Explanatory Note to heading 19.05 concerning wafers and waffles (Item (A) (9)) reads as follows:

"Waffles and wafers, which are light fine bakers' wares baked between patterned metal plates. This category also includes thin waffle products, which may be rolled, waffles consisting of a tasty filling sandwiched between two or more layers of thin waffle pastry, and products made by extruding waffle dough through a special machine (ice cream cornets, for example). The water content must be 10 % or less by weight of the finished product. Waffles may also be chocolate-covered. Wafers are products similar to waffles."

- 8. In the manufacturer's view, this Explanatory Note only sets a water content limit for the products mentioned in the sentence immediately preceding the sentence "The water content must be 10 % or less by weight of the finished product", that is "thin waffle products, which may be rolled, waffles consisting of a tasty filling sandwiched between two or more layers of thin waffle pastry, and products made by extruding waffle dough through a special machine (ice cream cornets, for example)."
- 9. The Japanese Administration (and the Secretariat), however, took the view that the above-mentioned provision applied to all the waffles and wafers described in the Explanatory Note (subheading 1905.30).
- 10. A study undertaken by the Secretariat concerning the history of the Explanatory Note to heading 19.05 with regard to item (A) (9) revealed that this text was based on a proposal from the Swiss Administration (Doc. 26.898). The initial Swiss proposal did not contain a provision for the water content limit, but during the discussion in the former Harmonized System Committee this criterion was added to the Swiss proposal (Appendix E.3. of Annex IV to Doc. 27.000). The Nomenclature Committee, at its 47th Session (see Annex D/3 to Doc. 28.100 Nov. 1981), adopted, with minor modifications, a Supplementary Explanatory Note to subheading 1905.30, which became an Explanatory Note during the final revision of the Explanatory Notes (see Annexes E/19 and M/12 to Doc. 28.500 May 82).
- 11. Accordingly, the Secretariat's study gave no answer as to the precise coverage of the water content limit for waffles and wafers. The Secretariat is, however, of the opinion that, if the water content limit should not apply to all waffles and wafers of subheading 1905.30, the Committees' Reports would have clearly stated that effect.

- 12. In this connection, it should be noted that the legal texts do not impose a water content limit, and based solely on the legal texts, classification of all waffles could therefore be considered in subheading 1905.30. However, as mentioned in paragraph 11 above, the Explanatory Notes make clear that a water content limit applies and in fact uses the word "must", a word normally reserved for legal texts. The Explanatory Notes thus create the curious situation that "Belgian waffles", for example, cannot be classified as "waffles" in the HS Nomenclature.
- 13. Since we have a situation where, according to the legal texts only, the products in question could be classified in subheading 1905.30, but when reading the legal texts in combination with the Explanatory Notes they could not, the Secretariat believes that the question must be resolved by the HS Committee.
- 14. The Secretariat is also of the view that the situation should be improved for the future and would suggest that if the Committee agrees that a 10 % water content criterion is applicable to waffles, such a criterion should be inserted in the legal texts.
- 15. The Secretariat is aware that one Contracting Party (EC) has introduced an additional note in its Combined Nomenclature, making it quite clear that waffles and wafers, with a water content of more than 10 % by weight, are excluded from subheading 1905.30. The Committee might consider introducing a similar provision in the HS Nomenclature as a solution to this "problem". The Committee is invited to express its views in this regard.
- 16. On the other hand, if the Committee takes the view that amending the Explanatory Note, (item (A) (9)) by defining "waffles and wafers" is enough to clarify the position, this could be done by moving the actual provision to the end of the item, and adding the words "of waffles and wafers" after "content" ("The water content of waffles and wafers must be 10 % or less by weight of the finished product"). This amendment would in the Secretariat's view, make it clearer that the water content limit applies to all waffles and wafers of item (A) (9).
- 17. In this regard, it should be recalled that the Committee has already decided to split present subheading 1905.30 into new subheadings 1905.31 ("sweet biscuits") and 1905.32 ("waffles and wafers") (see Doc. 41.600, Annex IJ/2). A similar approach might, therefore, also be envisaged for item (A) (8) (b) defining "sweet biscuits", taking into account that this item, in addition to the water content limit (12 %), also contains provisions for the "base" (50 %) and the "fat content" (35 %).

III. CONCLUSIONS

- 18. The Committee is invited to:
 - (a) rule on the classification of "Kellogg's® Breadia", bakers' wares (a kind of "waffles"), as described in paragraph 1 above, taking into account the Explanatory Note, item (A) (9), to heading 19.05 and the Secretariat's observations above;

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(b) express its views as to what further action should be taken to with regard to clarifying the classification of "waffles" with a higher water content than 10 %.

Bakers' wares (a kind of "waffles"), made from wheat flour (20-30 %), oat bran (5-10 %), fat (soya bean oil) (5-10 %), sugar (1-2 %), dried whey (1-2 %), dried egg white (0.5-0.9 %), salt (0.1-0.5 %), vitamins and water (40-50 %). After the waffles are baked, they are quick-frozen in a blast freezer. Before consumption the waffles have to be heated in an oven for 2 minutes.

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