

Paul Cole
Consumer and Competition Policy Directorate
Department of Trade and Industry
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

23rd December 2004

Dear Mr Cole

Consultation on consolidating and simplifying the Food Orders

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. As a consumer organisation representing 75,000 beer drinkers and pub goers our comments are confined to specified measures and the problem of short beer measures.

1.0 Short beer measures

1.1 We consider proposals to define a pint of beer or cider as “not less than 95% liquid” as a very controversial measure and believe it should be dealt with separately from the proposed Food Orders.

1.2 We strongly oppose the 95% minimum option for the following reasons:

- Due to enforcement tolerances a 95% minimum would in reality be a 92% or 93% minimum.
- Drinkers of products such as lager and cider not conventionally served with heads would be in a worse position. At present it would be clear breach of the law to serve a flat pint of cider or lager 5% deficient yet under the Government’s proposal it would become entirely lawful.
- The incentive for those pubs that currently serve correct measures to continue to do so would be greatly reduced.
- By entrenching in statute that a 95% pint represents a correct measure, the Government would be giving a green light to large pub chains to put immense pressure on their managers to maximize profits by serving pints up to 5% short.
- Consumers will be even less likely to risk the embarrassment of requesting a top up if licensees can point to the fact that the Government have decreed that 95% of a pint is an acceptable measure.

2.0 Specified measures

- 2.1 We support the retention of provisions specifying that draught beer and cider may only be sold in a third of a pint, half of a pint, and any multiple of half a pint. Any proposal to remove or amend these provisions to allow or require beer to be served in metric measures would be to the detriment of consumers.
- 2.2 We support the retention of the pint as the legal measure for the following reasons:
- Prices would be likely to rise if the pint was abolished as licensees sought to reduce the measure from a pint to half a litre without a corresponding reduction in the price of the beer
 - Also, consumer prices would be likely to rise as the costs of replacing glassware are passed on
 - There is no consumer demand for the pint to be replaced by the litre
- 2.3 We would oppose moves to allow licensees to serve litres in addition to pints. This would inevitably lead to confusion among consumers unclear whether they are being served a pint or half litre.

Please contact us if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Mail
Public Affairs Manager