



September 06, 2011

Secretary Donald S. Clark  
Federal Trade Commission  
Room H-113 (Annex A)  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

**RE: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking; request for public Comment:  
Care Labeling of Textile Wearing Apparel and Certain Piece Goods as  
Amended (76 FR 134; July 13, 2011)**

Dear Mr. Clark:

On behalf of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), I am submitting the following comments in response to the advance notice of proposed rulemaking and request for public comment in regards to the Federal Trade Commission's Care Labeling Rule as posted in the Federal Register July 13, 2011.

AAFA is the national trade association representing US apparel, footwear and other sewn products companies and their suppliers, which compete in the global market. Our mission is to promote and enhance our members' competitiveness, productivity and profitability in the global market by minimizing regulatory, legal, commercial, political, and trade restraints. Our member companies manufacture all types of apparel and footwear and are located in virtually every state in the US. They source and distribute products worldwide.

These comments will specifically address questions 1-3, 5, 6, 14, and 15 as posed in the Federal Register Notice.

*1) Is there a continuing need for the current Rule as currently promulgated?*

Yes, the use of care labels on apparel sold in the United States is beneficial to consumers, manufacturers, and business in general as it allows for the necessary flow of information along the commodity chain. Using care labels garners the instant benefit of instructing, not only professional cleaners but all those who will care for an item, on the best way to maintain the appearance and performance of the item over time. In addition, care labels have numerous added benefits such as helping the environment. Care labels that instruct users to wash in cold water and line dry when possible save energy; cleaning a garment properly may maintain the quality for a longer period of time and reduce waste; and, in some cases, a care label may instruct users to recycle the item after it is no longer needed. For example: the *Donate Movement* by Goodwill®

asks manufacturers to place a Donate icon on care labels to serve as a universal reminder to recycle through responsible donation, helping provide opportunities for others while diverting usable items from landfills.

*2) What benefits has the Rule provided to, or what significant costs has the Rule imposed on, consumers?*

Care Labels help consumers decide which products to purchase based on the care method required. Some individuals prefer the convenience of dry cleaning, others the economy of machine washing. At the same time, care labels assure that consumers know how to safely clean their clothes so that they retain their appearance and performance over time.

*3) What modifications, if any, should the Commission make to the Rule to increase its benefits or reduce its costs to consumers?*

Due to the lack of harmonization among international care label requirements, care labels on products destined for several various locations often contain a superfluous amount of information causing them to be confusing for consumers and uncomfortable to wear. The harmonization of care label requirements around the globe is a long-term goal for AAFA and we encourage the FTC to work on modifications to the current Care Labeling Rule in order to make the process easier and more cost-efficient for all those involved.

*5) What benefits, if any, has the Rule provided to, or what significant costs, including costs of compliance, has the Rule imposed on businesses, particularly small businesses?*

The benefits of care labels for professional garment cleaners are obvious as they instruct the business on the best ways to care for an item. Furthermore, the requirement of care labels help the apparel manufacturing industry as well, as it attracts clients who can better appreciate the value of an item when it is cared for correctly.

*6) What modifications, if any, should be made to the Rule to increase its benefits or reduce its costs to businesses, particularly small businesses?*

Although, there is a cost to manufacturers in attaching care labels to apparel products, it is a cost that is agreeably accepted by the companies who realize the benefits of labels. However, efforts to make labels that are within the guidelines for multiple markets and countries can result in very large or lengthy labels which unnecessarily cost businesses additional money. Harmonizing label requirements around the globe could reduce cost to manufacturers and allow for economies of scale as production increases.

*14) Should the Commission modify the Rule to address the development of ASTM D5489-07 "Standard Guide for Care Symbols for Care Instructions on Textile Products" or the use of symbols other than those set forth in the ASTM Standard D5489-96c "Guide to Care Symbols for Care Instructions on Consumer Textile Products"?*

Using symbols rather than text allows for important information to be easily understandable in any language, and helps satisfy consumer demands asking the apparel industry to decrease the size of care labels. While AAFA supports ASTM in its efforts to make symbols easily understandable in US markets, we encourage the FTC to recognize other systems of symbols as well, provided they meet the requirements of the underlying care labeling rules. Differences among various symbol systems, such as those created by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and the International Standards Organization (ISO) continue to be confusing for manufacturers, professional cleaners and consumers and limit the opportunity for trade growth within the industry. AAFA encourages the FTC to work on harmonization of US care label requirements with other countries. As an alternative, the option for manufacturers to be allowed to use either ASTM or ISO symbols in the US would relieve some of the burden and cost to businesses and increase the accessibility of global trade.

*15) Should the Commission modify the Rule to address disclosure of care instructions in languages other than English?*

AAFA members source products in over 70 countries and distribute them around the globe. These products are rarely destined for distribution in only one country but meet the minimum legal requirements for global trade, such as country of origin marking, size markings and sometimes material content. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance that the information placed on care labels be accessible for consumers in any market. When care label requirements are limited specifically by region, it serves as a barrier for trade and costs both manufacturers and consumers money. A harmonization of the use of symbols rather than text would eliminate the problems that arise from the need for various languages on labels.

A final issue that was raised by several AAFA members, but which was not specifically flagged by the request for comments, concerns the development of care labels and symbols for rental garments that are intended to be cared for professionally, and not by the user. An example might be corporate uniforms that employees wear but do not care for at home. Our strong recommendation is that these garments remain exempt from care labeling requirements. We believe this is critical for several reasons. First, such garments may be used in a manner that exposes them to harsh or hazardous substances. Safe handling and refurbishment of such garments requires professional care. If they had a home care instruction, employees might be encouraged to refurbish those garments at home using equipment that is not designed to handle any hazardous substances, presenting significant health and safety concerns. Moreover, if employees feel encouraged to home launder garments not intended for such treatment, they could subject those garments to processes that undermine the quality of the garments

themselves. Both concerns expose uniform rental companies to liabilities not envisioned in the Care Labeling Rule. Further, any possibility of home care instructions, would subject the uniform rental companies to additional testing burdens and costs that are not necessary for the care of the garment.

Again, AAFA thanks the Commission for the opportunity to comment on this issue and hope a positive solution may be soon reached. Please do not hesitate to let us know if we can be of help in the coming process.

Sincerely,  
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Kevin M. Burke  
President & CEO