

MSS Meets SME Exporters to Discuss Challenges Posed by EU Packaging Rules

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) met with SME representatives and experts on October 20 at Startup Venture Campus (SVC) Seoul to discuss the challenges exporters face in meeting the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). Shim Jae-yoon, Director General for Global Growth Policy at MSS, chaired the discussion.

The PPWR sets requirements for packaging placed on the EU market, including packaging used by exporters outside the EU. It covers restrictions on hazardous substances, recyclability, recycled content and labeling, as well as technical documentation and declarations of conformity.

Korean SMEs exporting to the EU need to prepare documents demonstrating that their packaging meets the applicable requirements, including limits on hazardous substances such as heavy metals and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Additional requirements, including those for recyclability and recycled content, will be phased in from 2030. For smaller companies without dedicated compliance staff, testing fees and the work involved in preparing these documents can be costly and time-consuming.

Since April, MSS has provided assistance at each stage of the compliance process, including training, assessments, testing, technical documentation and the appointment of an EU representative. This support covers up to 70% of eligible costs, capped at KRW 7 million per company, for 100 companies.

Additional funding is available through the strategic support category of the ministry's overseas certification assistance program. The category supports selected certifications for major consumer exports, urgent certification needs and certifications related to Korea's strategic export products. With PPWR compliance now included, eligible SMEs can receive funding for 50-70% of certification, testing and consulting costs, up to KRW 100 million per company. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis through November 30.

Around 10 people attended the meeting, including representatives from beauty, food and packaging SMEs and technical experts. The Korea Testing & Research Institute (KTR) explained the regulation's main requirements and reviewed how businesses are preparing to meet them.

Companies said they were struggling to obtain information on hazardous substances from packaging suppliers, pay for product testing and prepare technical documents and EU Declarations of Conformity (DoCs) in English.

MSS will hold training sessions and consultations in five regions across Korea from November 16 to 25. Businesses will be able to learn about the requirements, speak individually with experts and share their concerns with the ministry. Registration is available through the training application section of the SME Export Regulatory Response Support Center website.

"Meeting the PPWR's requirements is becoming essential for businesses seeking access to the European market," Director General Shim said. "We will draw on companies' feedback to strengthen financial assistance, training and advice, helping Korean SMEs meet the rules and avoid disruptions to their exports."

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