

Analysis of Proposed Consent Order to Aid Public Comment

In the Matter of Made in the USA Brand, LLC, File No. 142 3121

The Federal Trade Commission (“FTC” or “Commission”) has accepted, subject to final approval, an agreement containing a consent order from Made in the USA Brand, LLC. (“Respondent”).

The proposed consent order has been placed on the public record for thirty (30) days for receipt of comments by interested persons. Comments received during this period will become part of the public record. After thirty (30) days, the Commission will again review the agreement and the comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the agreement or make final the agreement’s proposed order.

This matter involves Respondent’s marketing, sale, and distribution of licenses to use its “Made in USA” certification mark to companies wishing to make U.S.-origin claims for their products. According to the FTC’s complaint, Respondent represented that products and entities using Respondent’s certification mark were independently and objectively evaluated for compliance with Respondent’s accreditation standard. These claims were false or misleading. Additionally, the complaint alleges that Respondent did not possess and rely upon a reasonable basis to substantiate its claims that entities promoted on its website sold products that are all or virtually all made in the United States. In fact, in numerous instances, entities promoted on Respondent’s website have sold products containing significant imported content. Finally, the complaint alleges that Respondent distributed promotional materials to third-party marketers for use in the marketing and sale of those third parties’ products, providing the means and instrumentalities to those marketers to commit deceptive acts or practices. Accordingly, the complaint concludes that Respondent engaged in deceptive acts or practices in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act.

The proposed consent order contains provisions designed to prevent Respondent from engaging in similar acts and practices in the future. Specifically, Part I prohibits Respondent from representing, expressly or by implication, that covered entities meet Respondent’s accreditation standard, unless: (1) an entity with no material connection to that covered entity conducted an independent and objective evaluation to confirm that the accreditation standard was met; or (2) Respondent’s mark and marketing materials prominently disclose that the accreditation standard may be met through self-certification.

Part II prohibits Respondent from making any country of origin claim about a product authorized to use Respondent’s certification mark unless: (1) the claim is true, not misleading, and Respondent has a reasonable basis substantiating the representation; or (2) for representations made through use of Respondent’s certification mark, Respondents clearly and prominently disclose that covered entities may meet the accreditation standard through self-certification.

Part III prohibits Respondent from providing third-party retailers with the means and instrumentalities to make the claims prohibited in Part I.

Parts IV through VIII are reporting and compliance provisions. Part IV requires Respondent to keep and make available to the Commission on request: copies of advertisements, labeling, packaging, and promotional materials containing the representations identified in Parts I and II; materials relied upon in disseminating those representations; evidence that contradicts, qualifies, or calls into question the representations or the basis relied upon for the representations; and all acknowledgments of receipt of the Order. Part V requires Respondent to disseminate the Order to principals, officers, directors, and managers, and to all current and future employees, agents, and representatives having responsibilities relating to the subject matter of the order. Part VI requires notification to the FTC of changes in Respondent's corporate status. Part VII requires Respondent to submit an initial compliance report to the FTC within sixty (60) days of service and subsequent reports upon request.

Finally, Part VIII is a "sunset" provision, terminating the order after twenty (20) years, with certain exceptions.

The purpose of this analysis is to aid public comment on the proposed order. It is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the proposed order or to modify its terms in any way.