



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

Bureau of Consumer Protection  
Division of Enforcement

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**VIA EMAIL**

Mr. Matt Rennerfeldt  
President  
Alpha Brewing Operations, LLC  
5041 Alvo Road  
Lincoln, NE 68514

Dear Mr. Rennerfeldt:

We received your submissions on behalf of Alpha Brewing Operations, LLC (“Alpha Brewing” or the “Company”). During our review, we discussed concerns that marketing materials may have overstated the extent to which certain beer canning lines are made in the United States.

As discussed, unqualified U.S.-origin claims in marketing materials – including claims that products are “Made” or “Built” in the USA – likely suggest to consumers that all products advertised in those materials are “all or virtually all” made in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The Commission may analyze a number of different factors to determine whether a product is “all or virtually all” made in the United States, including the proportion of the product’s total manufacturing costs attributable to U.S. parts and processing, how far removed any foreign content is from the finished product, and the importance of the foreign content or processing to the overall function of the product.

For a product that is substantially transformed in the United States, but not “all or virtually all” made in the United States, the Policy Statement explains, “any claim of U.S. origin should be adequately qualified to avoid consumer deception about the presence or amount of foreign content . . . . Clarity of language, prominence of type size and style, proximity to the

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<sup>1</sup> FTC, *Issuance of Enforcement Policy Statement on “Made in USA” and Other U.S. Origin Claims*, 62 Fed. Reg. 63756, 63768 (Dec. 2, 1997) (the “Policy Statement”). Additionally, beyond express “Made in USA” claims, “[d]epending on the context, U.S. symbols or geographic references, such as U.S. flags, outlines of U.S. maps, or references to U.S. locations of headquarters or factories, may, by themselves or in conjunction with other phrases or images, convey a claim of U.S. origin.” *Id.*

claim being qualified, and an absence of contrary claims that could undercut the effectiveness of the qualification will maximize the likelihood that the qualifications and disclosures are appropriately clear and prominent.”<sup>2</sup>

In appropriate situations, even if a particular product is not “all or virtually all” made in the United States or substantially transformed in the United States, “a marketer may make a claim that a particular manufacturing or other process was performed in the United States, or that a particular part was manufactured in the United States, provided that the claim is truthful and substantiated and that reasonable consumers would understand the claim to refer to a specific process or part and not to the general manufacture of the product.”<sup>3</sup> For example, a marketer may be able to substantiate a non-deceptive claim that a foreign-origin product is “Designed” in the United States. In that case, the marketer could make this claim as long as it does not imply the product is of U.S.-origin, and the marketer does not omit or obscure any required foreign-origin labeling.

As discussed, it is appropriate for Alpha Brewing to continue to promote the fact that it employs workers, conducts some assembly functions, and designs products in the United States. However, marketing materials should not convey that products are “all or virtually all” made in the United States unless the Company can substantiate those claims. Accordingly, to avoid deceiving consumers, Alpha Brewing removed unqualified U.S.-origin claims from all marketing materials, and notified all dealers and staff of this change.

FTC staff members are available to work with companies to craft claims that serve the dual purposes of conveying non-deceptive information and highlighting work done in the United States. Based on Alpha Brewing’s actions and other factors, the staff has decided not to pursue this investigation any further. This action should not be construed as a determination that there was no violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45. The Commission reserves the right to take such further action as the public interest may require. If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,



Julia Solomon Ensor  
Staff Attorney



Lashanda Freeman  
Federal Trade Investigator

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 63770.