

The Legal Responsibility of Business Actors Regarding SEAO Fiber Drink Benefit Claims in Fostering Consumer Trust and Protection in Indonesia

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Abstract

The rapid growth of the functional food industry in Indonesia, particularly fiber drinks, creates new challenges in consumer protection law enforcement. PT SEAO SUPER FIBE, through its SÉAO product, positions itself as a solution for digestive health and weight management. However, there is a gap between administrative regulations (BPOM Distribution Permit) and marketing strategies that utilize detoxification and weight management claims based on scientific studies that were recently retracted. This research aims to analyze the legal responsibility of business actors regarding the validity of product benefit claims and the juridical implications of potential overclaiming in building consumer trust. Using a normative juridical research method with a statutory and conceptual approach, this research finds that the use of "Detox" claims for conventional processed food categories potentially violates food labeling and advertising regulations. Furthermore, reliance on scientific references that are no longer valid creates a risk of strict liability for business actors. This article recommends harmonization between marketing narratives and globally recognized scientific standards to ensure comprehensive consumer protection.

I. Introduction

The post-pandemic shift in the lifestyles of Indonesians has sparked a surge in demand for functional food products, particularly fiber drinks, which are positioned as practical solutions for weight management and digestive health (Humiaty & Silfiah, 2021). Amid increasingly fierce market competition, businesses often resort to making aggressive health claims to attract consumers (Bahar et al., 2023). PT SEAO SUPER FIBE, as the business entity that distributes SÉAO-branded fiber beverages, finds itself at the center of these regulatory dynamics. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the legal responsibilities of business operators regarding claims about the benefits of these products within the framework of consumer protection law in Indonesia, with a focus on the alignment between administrative legality, the substantive validity of claims, and the mitigation of legal risks associated with potential misinformation.

In addition, the shift in consumption patterns among Indonesians following the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the paradigm of food from merely fulfilling basic needs to serving as a means of maintaining health and fitness (Budisusila, 2021). This phenomenon has sparked a boom in the fiber drink market, with these products promoted as a practical solution for “cleansing” the body of toxins and managing weight. PT SEAO SUPER FIBE, a Sidoarjo-based company, has entered the market with its SÉAO brand, which offers a combination of popular ingredients such as apple cider vinegar, inulin, and chia seeds (JDIH POM, 2022).

In the world of commerce, the relationship between producers and consumers is inherently asymmetrical. The theory of information asymmetry explains that producers have far more in-depth technical knowledge about the quality and benefits of products than consumers do. To bridge this gap, the law requires transparency of information through labeling and advertising (Government of the

Republic of Indonesia, 1999). However, intense competition often drives businesses to employ aggressive marketing strategies, including the use of exaggerated health claims (overclaims) (Jalilah et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have been conducted on consumer protection in the food industry, though with varying focuses:

- a. Syahrul Iqbal (2023): Highlights legal protections for consumers regarding frozen processed foods without marketing authorization, emphasizing that the absence of marketing authorization eliminates safety guarantees for consumers.
- b. Adhyasta Dwi Pangestu & Siti Hapsah Isfardiyana (2023): Analyzing discrepancies in nutritional information labels on protein products, which result in health risks for consumers and violate their right to accurate information.
- c. Edwin Yuliska (2023): Focusing on the ban on misleading advertisements, in which the use of hyperbolic language without full disclosure can be categorized as information fraud.
- d. Ali Zubaidi (2025): Examining the legal liability of home-based food MSMEs, noting that business owners' low awareness of P-IRT permits has a direct impact on legal risks and public health.

Unlike previous research, this article offers originality in three main aspects. First, this study conducts a specific case study on SÉAO products, which involve complex licensing arrangements between the brand owner (PT SEAO SUPER FIBE) and the contract manufacturer (PT Aimfood Manufacturing Indonesia). Second, this article analyzes the legal implications of the retraction of a key scientific study used as the basis for marketing claims—a legal phenomenon that is rarely discussed but crucial in proving false advertising in the digital information age (Ana, 2026). Third, this study integrates the latest standards from BPOM (2024), the FDA (2024), and EFSA to provide a comparative perspective on claims regarding fiber and

detoxification (Kahiji, 2026).

2. Research Method

This study employs a normative legal research method, which involves examining library materials or secondary data as the basis for the research by conducting a review of regulations and literature related to the issue under study (Marzuki, 2014). The approaches used are the statutory and conceptual approaches. The statutory approach involves analyzing Law No. 8 of 1999 on Consumer Protection, Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food, Government Regulation No. 69 of 1999 on Food Labeling and Advertising, and BPOM Regulation No. 1 of 2022. Meanwhile, the conceptual approach draws on perspectives and doctrines that have developed within legal scholarship, particularly regarding the principle of strict liability and theories of consumer protection in asymmetric economies.

The data used consisted of secondary data, comprising primary legal materials such as PT SEAO SUPER FIBE's licensing documents (NIB, BPOM MD Marketing Authorization, Intellectual Property Rights Certificate) and national laws and regulations. It also included secondary legal materials such as legal journals, scientific opinions from the EFSA (European Union) and the FDA (United States), as well as news reports regarding the withdrawal of clinical studies on apple cider vinegar. The data was analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical method. The author identified facts regarding the marketing of SEAO products, compared them with applicable regulatory standards, and drew conclusions regarding the legal responsibilities of the business operator in question.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Administrative Compliance and Substantive Validity of Health Claims on Processed Foods

Consumer trust in a functional food product is built on a foundation of transparent legal compliance. PT SEAO SUPER FIBE has met the basic operational requirements by holding a Business Identification Number (NIB) 0506240063609, issued on June 5, 2024. Based on this risk-based business licensing data, the company is classified as a micro-enterprise under the Indonesian Standard Industrial Classification (KBLI) code 46339, which covers the wholesale trade of other foods and beverages. This legal status is an absolute prerequisite for businesses to operate legally within Indonesia's trade ecosystem, as stipulated in the Job Creation Law. However, administrative compliance at the NIB level is merely the first step; the real legal challenge lies in how the product is technically registered and marketed.

SEAO products have obtained a Processed Food Distribution Permit with BPOM RI number MD 272882017500050 for the food category "Apple-Flavored Beverage Concentrate." From a food regulation perspective, this categorization is crucial. The designation of the food category as "Beverage Concentrate" indicates that this product is classified as a conventional processed food, not as a dietary supplement or traditional medicine. This classification carries strict legal implications regarding the types of health claims permitted on labels and in advertisements. According to BPOM Regulation No. 1 of 2022 on the Oversight of Claims on Processed Food Labels and Advertisements, every health claim must be based on the fundamental characteristics of the approved food category.

1) Discrepancies Between Food Category Names and Marketing Claims

A fundamental issue arises when comparing the Marketing Authorization (NIE) document with the product's promotional materials. On the label approved by BPOM,

the food category is listed as “Apple-Flavored Beverage Concentrate” and does not include the term “Detox” at all. In contrast, in marketing brochures and product presentations, SÉAO is heavily promoted under the titles “Fiber Detox & Craving Control” and “Total Body Detox.” From a legal standpoint, the use of the word “Detox” on a product registered solely as an apple beverage concentrate potentially violates Article 6 of Government Regulation No. 69 of 1999, which prohibits the inclusion of false or misleading information on food labels.

“Detox” or detoxification claims are often considered to be exaggerated claims about a product’s benefits (overclaims). Physiologically, detoxification is a natural process carried out by the human liver and kidneys; therefore, claims that a beverage can perform this process are considered scientifically ineffective in the context of processed foods. Businesses that include “Detox” claims on their labels without BPOM approval are in violation of Article 47 of Government Regulation No. 69 of 1999, which requires food advertisements to contain accurate and non-misleading information. This non-compliance creates administrative legal risks for PT SEAO SUPER FIBE, ranging from written warnings to the revocation of its distribution license (Sondakh, 2017).

Table 1. Comparison of Legal Data vs. SÉAO Marketing Claims

Attributes	Data Based on Marketing Authorization (NIE)
Food Type Name	Apple-Flavored Beverage Concentrate
Trade Name	SÉAO
Main Ingredients	Apple Cider Vinegar, Chia Seeds, Green Tea, Aloe Vera
Benefit Claims	No health claims are listed on the NIE
Regulatory Status	MD Processed Foods

2) Analysis of Raw Material Composition and Dietary Fiber Standards

SÉAO uses ingredients such as inulin, apple cider vinegar, chia seeds, aloe vera, and fenugreek. Theoretically, inulin is widely recognized as a prebiotic that supports the growth of beneficial bacteria such as Bifidobacterium in the gut (Slavin, 2013). However, to include such functional claims on the label, the product must meet certain thresholds. According to BPOM Regulation 1/2022, the claim “Source of Dietary Fiber” is only permitted if the product contains at least 3 grams of fiber per 100 grams (for solid forms) or 1.5 grams per 100 kcal (for liquid forms). PT SEAO SUPER FIBE’s legal responsibility includes the obligation to prove through laboratory testing that a 30-ml serving of their concentrate actually contains fiber levels that meet these requirements before the “Fiber” claim is used extensively in their branding.

On a global scale, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has issued a rigorous scientific opinion on dietary fiber. EFSA emphasizes that claims related to “bowel function” or “increased stool bulk” may only be made if the product possesses scientifically measurable physicochemical characteristics of dietary fiber (EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, 2011a). If a food product in Indonesia claims similar benefits but is not supported by an adequate concentration of active ingredients (for example, inulin used only as a supplementary ingredient in trace amounts), then the business operator may be deemed to have engaged in misleading consumers (Deswari et al., 2025). This is particularly relevant given that SÉAO’s target market consists of women who are watching their weight and active professionals who want instant results.

3) The Role of Apple Cider Vinegar and the Challenge of Global Scientific Validity

One of the key components in SÉAO is apple cider vinegar, which is claimed to boost detoxification enzymes and fat metabolism. SÉAO’s promotional materials cite a clinical study showing that consuming 10–15 ml of apple cider vinegar per day can

lead to significant weight loss (7.0–7.4 kg in 12 weeks). However, a crucial fact is that the study conducted by Abou-Khalil et al. (2024) was retracted by the journal BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health in September 2025 due to serious errors in data analysis and statistical distributions that were unlikely to have occurred by chance (Retraction Watch, 2025).

The retraction of the study creates a major gap in the validity of SÉAO's claims regarding weight management. Legally, the use of scientific references that have been retracted or proven to be flawed as the basis for marketing claims constitutes a violation of Article 10(a) of the Consumer Protection Law, which prohibits businesses from making false statements regarding the condition or efficacy of a product. Businesses' legal responsibility does not end with product registration; they also have an obligation to monitor scientific developments to ensure that claims presented to the public remain accurate and are not based on pseudoscience (Deswari et al., 2025).

B. Legal Liability and Legal Implications of Exaggerated Claims in Advertising

The second issue at the heart of consumer protection is the mechanism for holding businesses accountable when losses occur or when there is a discrepancy between advertising claims and the actual benefits of a product. In Indonesia, the relationship between businesses and consumers is strictly regulated by Law No. 8 of 1999 on Consumer Protection (UUPK).

Under consumer protection law, Indonesia adheres to the principle of strict liability for manufacturers. Article 19 of the Consumer Protection Law (UUPK) stipulates that businesses are liable to provide compensation for damage, contamination, and/or losses suffered by consumers as a result of consuming goods they produce or sell. In the context of SÉAO, if a consumer experiences health problems (such as acute dehydration or electrolyte imbalance) due to the use of a

product promoted by misleading “Detox” claims, PT SEO SUPER FIBE is legally obligated to be held liable without the consumer having to prove any fault on the part of the company (Pranda, 2022).

The burden of proof in this dispute is reversed. This means that PT SEO SUPER FIBE must prove in court that its products are safe and that its “Craving Control” claims are based on valid scientific evidence and are not misleading (Pranda, 2022). If a company fails to prove the validity of its claims—especially after its primary scientific references have been retracted by the international scientific community—then that company is automatically deemed to have violated consumers’ right to honest information (Retraction Watch, 2025).

Table 2. Types of Legal Liability for Business Entities and Their Implications for PT SEO SUPER FIBE

Types of Legal Liability for Business Entities	Primary Legal Basis	Implications for PT SEO SUPER FIBE
Civil Liability	Article 19 of the Consumer Protection Act	The obligation to provide damages or compensation to consumers who have suffered harm.
Administrative Responsibilities	Article 60 of the Consumer Protection Act, Article 102 of the Food Act	Penalties ranging from fines and product recalls to the revocation of the BPOM NIE.
Criminal Liability	Article 62 of the Consumer Protection Act	A maximum prison sentence of 5 years or a maximum fine of 2 billion rupiah for misleading advertisements.

Professional Responsibility	Indonesian Ethics	Advertising	The obligation to ensure that advertising information is truthful and does not use harmful hyperbole.
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Article 17 of the Consumer Protection Law specifically prohibits advertising businesses from producing advertisements that mislead consumers regarding the quality, utility, and warranty of a product. The use of testimonials or claims of instant results (e.g., “Balanced Body—Comfortable Life” or “Cravings Under Control”) without clinical evidence that meets the gold standard of research (randomized controlled trials) may be categorized as false advertising.

This legal responsibility regarding advertising also includes a prohibition on the use of the terms “safe” or “without side effects” unless accompanied by complete information (Pradana, 2023). In SÉAO’s promotional materials, the slogan “More Than Just Fiber” tends to create medical expectations in consumers’ minds, even though the product is merely a standard processed food. This violates Article 53 of Government Regulation No. 69 of 1999, which prohibits food advertisements from containing statements that the food functions as a medicine. Businesses must recognize that the well-intentioned goal of promoting a healthy lifestyle to consumers must not be achieved by manipulating nutritional information.

The analysis of SÉAO’s legal liability is unique because this product is manufactured by PT Aimfood Manufacturing Indonesia (Bekasi) but distributed and branded by PT SEAO SUPER FIBE (Sidoarjo). In the food industry, this arrangement is known as contract manufacturing. Under the UUPK, both entities are classified as business operators; however, primary responsibility for the label content and advertising claims rests with the brand owner or the party that markets the product

to the public (Tsabita et al., 2023).

PT Aimfood is responsible for ensuring compliance with production safety standards (CPPOB), but PT SEAO SUPER FIBE bears responsibility for the “Benefit Promises” disseminated through social media and digital platforms. In the event of a lawsuit regarding product defects or misleading information, the brand owner cannot shift all responsibility to the manufacturing plant, especially if the claims stem from the brand owner’s internal marketing strategy (Pattipawae, 2018). Harmonizing these responsibilities is important to provide legal certainty for consumers who use contract manufacturing services (Disantara et al., 2024).

The fact that the scientific reference regarding apple cider vinegar has been retracted serves as a legal “red flag.” If PT SEAO SUPER FIBE continues to use the 7 kg weight loss claim in its marketing after the retraction date (September 2025), then the element of “intent” in providing false information will have been satisfied (Retraction Watch, 2025). This could elevate the classification of the violation from mere negligence to a consumer protection crime punishable under Article 62 of the Consumer Protection Law.

Companies have a responsibility to voluntarily recall promotional materials that no longer have a valid scientific basis. This preventive measure is preferable to waiting for punitive action from the government, which could result in the closure of websites or the blocking of social media accounts by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) at the request of the Indonesian Food and Drug Administration (BPOM) (Anroneka & Octora, 2026). In the long run, building consumer trust through scientific integrity is more beneficial than pursuing short-term profits through legally tenuous claims.

1) Comparative Analysis of International Regulations: FDA (U.S.) and EFSA (European Union)

To understand SEAO's legal standing in a global context, it is necessary to examine the standards set by health authorities in developed countries. This provides perspective on how "Fiber" and "Weight Management" claims should be managed professionally. The FDA in the United States permits voluntary health claims on food labels if there is sufficient scientific evidence (significant scientific agreement) (Kantor, 2025). One of the permitted claims is the link between soluble fiber and a reduced risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). However, the FDA is very specific about which types of fiber are eligible for this claim, such as beta-glucan from oats or psyllium husks (Kantor, 2025).

The FDA has also tightened the definition of the "Healthy" label. As of late 2024, a product may only be labeled "Healthy" if it meets specific nutritional criteria, including maximum limits for added sugars and sodium (Food and Drug Administration, 2025a). If SEAO is marketed under the "Healthy Lifestyle" narrative, then from a moral and international business ethics standpoint, the company must be able to prove that the added sugar content in its concentrated beverages does not exceed levels that could undermine a balanced diet (Food and Drug Administration, 2025b).

In the European Union, EFSA is highly skeptical of "weight loss" claims on food products. EFSA emphasizes that weight management claims may only be made if there is a clear cause-and-effect relationship between consumption of the food and a reduction in body fat mass in the general healthy population (Nutrition and Allergies (NDA) EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, 2010). Claims such as "reducing appetite" or "increasing feelings of fullness" require very robust clinical research in humans and cannot be based solely on in vitro data or animal studies (EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, 2011b).

Indonesia, through the BPOM, is gradually adopting standards aligned with these

international principles in BPOM Regulation No. 1 of 2022. Therefore, domestic businesses such as PT SEAFO SUPER FIBRE can no longer hide behind a lack of oversight. Compliance with global standards has become a benchmark of a company's professionalism in protecting consumers from being exploited by unrealistic health claims (Istana UMKM, 2025).

Table 3. A Comparison of Regulatory Agencies and Their Relevance to Processed Foods

Authority Agency	Policy on Fiber and Body Weight Claims	Relevance to Processed Foods
BPOM (Indonesia)	Nutritional claims are permitted if the nutrient meets the "Source" or "High" threshold.	Must be approved during the label registration process.
FDA (United States)	Claims regarding a reduction in disease risk are permitted under the SSA (Significant Scientific Agreement) standard.	Focus on specific types of soluble fiber and limiting sugar and fat.
EFSA (European Union)	Requires strong human data; "detox" claims are generally not accepted.	Emphasizing the role of stool volume in gut health.

2) Risk Mitigation Mechanisms for Fiber Beverage Businesses

Given the legal complexities outlined above, businesses need to adopt strategic measures to build consumer trust while protecting themselves from potential legal claims.

- a. Advertising Compliance Audit (*Ad Compliance Audit*): Companies must ensure that every word in their brochures, websites, and social media posts does not go beyond

what has been approved by BPOM in the NIE. The use of terms such as “Detox” must be evaluated immediately and replaced with valid functional claims such as “Helps meet daily fiber needs.”

- b. Ongoing Verification of Scientific References: In light of the retraction of the study by Abou-Khalil et al. (2024), the company is required to replace the scientific basis of its marketing with other, more credible studies that have not been retracted by the scientific community (Retraction Watch, 2025). This is important for maintaining brand integrity in the eyes of increasingly well-informed consumers (Ningrum, 2025).
- c. Transparency of Nutritional Information (ING): The inclusion of a complete and easy-to-read ING table on every sachet package is a non-negotiable legal requirement (Bikin Pabrik, 2026). Information about the sugar content and type of fiber (inulin) per 30-ml serving will provide clarity for consumers with specific dietary restrictions (Istana UMKM, 2025).
- d. Consumer Education and Safety Warnings: Providing clear information on how to consume the product and warnings for at-risk groups (such as people with diabetes or pregnant women) is a manifestation of corporate social responsibility and compliance with the UUPK.

4. Conclusion

The legal responsibility of business operators regarding claims about the benefits of SÉAO fiber drinks is a multidimensional obligation that encompasses administrative, scientific, and business ethics aspects. PT SEAO SUPER FIBE, as a microbusiness entity, has demonstrated initial compliance through its NIB and NIE registrations. However, the discrepancy between the registered food category and the “Detox” claim, as well as the use of scientific references that have been retracted

globally, creates significant legal vulnerabilities.

Within Indonesia's consumer protection ecosystem, trust is built not only through appealing branding but also through the honesty of information that can be empirically verified. The principle of strict liability requires businesses to remain vigilant regarding the accuracy of every claim they make. Effective consumer protection will be achieved when businesses are able to align their commercial ambitions with compliance with the safety, quality, and nutritional standards established by the government. Ultimately, legal compliance is not merely a cost burden but a long-term investment in building consumer loyalty based on evidence, not just promises.

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