

Packaging and labelling

How to label your food packaging products and the legal requirements that you have to follow as a food business.

Food and drink labelling changes from 1 January 2021

From 1 January, food and drink producers, manufacturers, retailers and suppliers must adhere to new rules.

[Read the guidance on food and drink labelling changes from 1 January 2021](#)

Labelling of prepacked foods

All prepacked food requires a food label that displays certain mandatory information. All foods will be subject to general food labelling requirements and any labelling provided must be accurate and not misleading.

Certain foods are controlled by [product specific regulations](#) and they include:

- bread and flour
- cocoa and chocolate products
- soluble coffee
- evaporated and dried milk
- honey
- infant formula
- jams
- meat products - sausages, burgers and pies
- natural mineral waters
- spreadable fats
- sugars
- irradiated food
- foods containing genetic modification (GM)

FSA Explains: Compositional standards

[Labelling e-training course](#)

What must be included

The following information must appear by law on food labels and packaging:

Name of the food

The name of the food must be clearly stated on the packaging and not be misleading.

If the food has been processed in some way, the process must be included in the title, for example 'smoked bacon', 'salted peanuts' or 'dried fruit'.

A processed food is any food that has been altered in some way during preparation.

List of ingredients

If your food or drink product has two or more ingredients (including water and [additives](#)), you must list them all. Ingredients must be listed in order of weight, with the main ingredient first according to the amounts that were used to make the food.

Allergen information

Food products that contain any of the [14 allergens](#) as an ingredient must be listed. You must highlight allergens on the label using a different font, style or background colour.

This enables consumers to understand more about the ingredients in pre-packed foods and are helpful for people with food allergies and intolerances who need to avoid certain foods.

We provide [free online allergen training](#) for businesses.

Quantitative declaration of ingredients (QUID)

The [QUID](#) tells a customer the percentage of particular ingredients contained in a food product. The indication can be given with the name of the food or in the ingredients list.

The indication of quantity of an ingredient or category of ingredients can:

- be displayed as a percentage, which corresponds to the quantity of the ingredient or ingredients at the time of its/their use; and
- appear either in or immediately next to the name of the food or in the list of ingredients in connection with the ingredient or category of ingredients in question.

Net quantity

All packaged foods above 5g or 5ml (except herbs and spices) must show the net quantity on the label to comply with [EU Regulation No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers \(FIC\)](#).

Foods that are packaged in liquid (or an ice glaze) must show the drained net weight.

Packaged food below 5g or 5ml are exempt from these requirements.

Storage conditions and date labelling

Food labels must be marked with either a 'best before' or 'use by' date so that it is clear how long foods can be kept and how to store them.

Further information can be found in the [guide on date marking](#) on the Waste & Resources Action Plan (WRAP) website.

Name and address of manufacturer

The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or seller, must be stated on the label. The address needs to be a physical address within the EU where your business can be contacted by mail. You can't use an e-mail address or phone number. This gives consumers the opportunity to contact the manufacturer if they have a complaint about the product or if they want to know more about it.

Country of origin or place of provenance

The label must clearly show where the food has come from and the origin of the main ingredients must be given if this is different from where the final product is made. Customers might be misled without this information, for example a Melton Mowbray Pork pie which was made in Italy.

You must show the country of origin for:

- beef, veal, lamb, mutton, pork, goat and poultry
- fish and shellfish
- honey
- olive oil
- wine
- fruit and vegetables imported from outside the EU

Find out [when you must label your meat, fish or seafood product with its country of origin](#).

Preparation instructions

Instructions on how to prepare and cook the food, including for heating in a microwave oven, must be given on the label if they are needed. If the food must be heated, the temperature of the oven and the cooking time will usually be stated.

Nutritional declaration

The mandatory nutrition declaration must be clearly presented in a specific format and give values for energy and six nutrients. The values must be given in the units (including both kJ and kcal for energy) per 100g/ml, and the nutrition declaration must meet the minimum font size requirements.

Additional labelling requirements

There are [additional labelling requirements](#) for certain food and drink products. You must tell the consumer if your products contain:

- sweeteners or sugars
- aspartame and colourings
- liquorice
- caffeine
- polyols

FSA Explains: Food labels

Food labelling training

We provide free online [Food labelling training](#) for businesses.

How to display mandatory information on packaging and labels

A minimum font size applies to mandatory information which you must print using a font with a minimum x-height of 1.2mm.

If the largest surface area of packaging is less than 80cm squared, you can use a minimum x-height of 0.9mm.

Mandatory details must be indicated with words and numbers. They can also be shown using pictograms and symbols.

Mandatory food information must:

- be easy to see
- be clearly legible and be difficult to remove, where appropriate
- not be in any way hidden, obscured, detracted from or interrupted by any other written or pictorial matter

Food labelling - non-prepacked foods

Non-prepacked foods or loose foods include everything that is not pre-packed and have fewer labelling requirements than those that are prepacked.

Labelling requirements

Non-prepacked food will need to be labelled with the following:

- the name of the food
- the [allergens present in the food](#)
- the [quantitative ingredients declaration \(QUID\)](#), on products containing meat
- in the case of irradiated food, one of the following statements must appear in close proximity to the name of the food:
 - 'irradiated' or

- 'treated with ionising radiation'

You can find more information on [labelling requirements for non-prepacked food products](#) on the Business Companion website.

Packaging wrappers (Vacuum packing)

If you [vacuum pack \(VP\) or modified atmosphere pack \(MAP\)](#) food as part of your business then you must:

- use material that will not be a source of contamination for wrapping and packaging
- store wrapping materials so they are not at risk of contamination
- wrap and package the food in a way that avoids contamination of products
- make sure that any containers are clean and not damaged, particularly if you use cans or glass jars
- be able to keep the wrapping or packaging material clean

We provide free online [Vacuum packaging e-training](#) for businesses.

Food authenticity

Food authenticity is when food matches its description. Labelling is regulated to protect consumers who should have the correct information to make confident and informed food choices based on diet, allergies, personal taste or cost.

Mislabeled food deceives the consumer and creates unfair competition with manufacturers or traders. Everyone has the right to know that the food they have bought matches the description given on the label. Part of our role is to help prevent mislabelling or misleading descriptions of foods.

The description of food refers to the information given about its:

- name
- ingredient
- origin
- processing

If you think that a food product is not authentic, please see information on [food crime](#).

Falsely describing, advertising or presenting food is an offence and there are many laws that help protect consumers against dishonest labelling and misleading descriptions.

The legislation

The European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) [Regulation 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers brings together EU rules on general food labelling and nutrition labelling into one piece of legislation.

We have summary guidance for food business operators and enforcement officers in, Northern Ireland and Wales according to the Food Information Regulations 2014.

[View FIR 2014 - Summary guidance for food business operators and enforcement officers in Wales, NI and Scotland as PDF](#) (525.61 KB)

The guidance provides non-statutory advice and should be read in alongside with Regulation 1169/2011 and the Food Information Regulations 2014 for the relevant nation.

[The Food Information Regulations 2014 in England](#) enables local authorities to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.

Defra provide summary [guidance for England](#)

[The Food Information Regulations 2014 in Northern Ireland](#) enables district councils in Northern Ireland to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.

[The Food Information \(Wales\) Regulations 2014 in Wales](#) enables local authorities to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.