

FOOD LABELS

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

1

Nutrition information panel

This panel shows the average amount of energy, protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium in a serve and in 100 g (or 100 ml) of the food. The amount of any other nutrient or substance about which a nutrition content or health claim is made must also be shown (e.g. the amount of calcium must be shown if a claim about calcium is made).

2

Percentage labelling

Food labels must show the percentage of the key or characterising ingredients or components in the food. This allows similar foods to be compared. The characterising ingredient for this strawberry yoghurt is strawberry and the ingredient list states that it contains 7% strawberries.

3

Food identification

To help identify a food, food labels must show:

- the name of the food
- the name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the supplier of the food
- the lot identification of the food.

The name or description of the food must reflect its true nature (e.g. strawberry yoghurt must contain strawberries). If the yoghurt contained strawberry flavouring rather than real fruit, then the name would need to indicate that it is strawberry-flavoured yoghurt.

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Information for people with food allergies or intolerances

Some food ingredients and substances can cause severe allergic reactions and must be declared when present in a food. These ingredients are peanuts, tree nuts (e.g. cashews, almonds, and walnuts), crustacea, fish, milk, eggs, sesame, soybeans, and wheat.

Sulphites (if added at 10 mg or more per kg of food) and cereals containing gluten (e.g. wheat, oats, barley, rye and spelt) also need to be declared.

5

Date marking

Foods that should be eaten before a certain date for health or safety reasons must be labelled with a use-by date.

Otherwise a best-before date is required if the food has a shelf life of less than two years. Although it may be safe to eat a food after its best-before date, it may have lost quality and some nutritional value.

6

Ingredient list

Ingredients must be listed in descending order (by ingoing weight). So if an ingredient is listed near the start of the list, then the food contains more of this ingredient than others lower down the list.

7

Labels must tell the truth

Under Australian and New Zealand consumer laws, labels must not be false, misleading or deceptive.

Suppliers must also label foods with accurate weights and measures information. The National Measurement Institute in Australia (www.measurement.gov.au) and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs in New Zealand (www.consumerprotection.govt.nz) ensure that correct weight and measurement information is used on food labels.

8

Food additives

Food additives must be identified in the ingredient list, usually by their class name (e.g. 'thickener' or 'colour') followed by the food additive name or number. A thickener has been used in this yoghurt and is labelled as 'thickener (1442)'. A full list of food additive names and numbers is available from www.foodstandards.gov.au

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Nutrition and health claims

Nutrition content claims are claims about the content of certain nutrients or substances in a food, (e.g. 'contains calcium'). Health claims refer to a relationship between a food and health. There are rules for when nutrition content or health claims are made on food labels.

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Country of origin

Australia and New Zealand have different country of origin labelling requirements.

In Australia, the country of origin of packaged and some unpackaged foods must be stated on the label. Read more about country of origin labelling on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission website at www.accc.gov.au

In New Zealand, country of origin labelling is required on wine only. Further information is available on the Ministry for Primary Industries website at www.foodsafety.govt.nz/industry/sectors/wine/labelling-composition

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Legibility requirements

Any labelling requirements must be in English, be legible and prominent so as to contrast distinctly with the background on the label.



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Directions for use and storage

Where specific storage conditions are required for a food to keep until its best-before or use-by date, those conditions must be included on the label.

If the food must be used in accordance with certain directions for health or safety reasons, those directions must be included on the label.

For more information on food labelling

Visit www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodlabelling

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Disclaimer: This poster has been produced as a guide to consumers only. Industry and enforcement agencies should refer to the Food Standards Code.