

Labelling – general requirements

Labelling requirements for food sold in Australia and New Zealand are set out in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of the Food Standards Code (the Code).

Food labelling provides consumers with important information about the food they are buying and consuming. The information on the label must:

- be visible on the outside of the package
- be legible and in English
- be unambiguous
- not mislead the consumer.

Exemptions from labelling requirements apply to unpackaged food and some packaged foods – see Labelling exemptions below.

Under food law, advertising information is equivalent to labelling.

Information a food label must contain

The food label must identify the following basic information:

- a **name for the food** which is prescribed by the Code, or a name/description that describes the true nature of the food
- the **production 'lot'** of the food prepared under the same conditions and during a particular span of time (date coding can in some circumstances satisfy the requirement for a lot number)
- the **name and street address** in Australia or New Zealand of the supplier, packer, manufacturer, vendor or importer of the food
- **warning and advisory statements and declarations** of the presence of substances that may adversely affect the health of people with allergies and food sensitivities
- a list of the **ingredients**
- a statement of the **shelf life** of the product as either a 'use-by' or a 'best before' date if the food has a shelf life of less than 2 years (see related factsheet [Labelling – Date marking, storage conditions and directions for use](#) (PDF, 147 KB))
- **directions for use and storage** where these are needed for reasons of health and safety or to ensure shelf life is achieved
- a **nutrition information panel (NIP)**, which shows the quantity of the basic nutrients contained in the food, per serving and per 100g of that food. Certain packaged foods are exempt from the requirement to carry a NIP, such as alcoholic beverages, water, herbs and spices, and prepared sandwiches.

Additional information such as characterising ingredients may also be required. See foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/food-labelling for more information.

Portion-packed foods

Retail businesses often purchase bulk-packed foods, such as cheese wheels, smallgoods, nuts and pulses, which are then divided into portions and repackaged on their premises. The retailer displays these foods in self-service cabinets. Although portion-packed foods require labelling information (as listed above), there are some additional options available to retailers to comply with the Code.

Retailers may be able to choose to:

- attach a label to each portion-packed food, or
- display labelling information on a sign/booklet or tearaway pamphlet near the portion-packed food.

The information must be legible, and the consumer should be able to readily identify the portion-packed food to which the information relates. Information that may change frequently or is essential to protect consumer safety (for example, the use-by date, lot code, storage conditions, allergens) should be declared on a label that is attached to the portion-packed food.

Labelling exemptions

Some food offered for retail sale is exempt from general labelling requirements. Food does not need to be labelled if it is:

- unpackaged
- in an 'inner' package, not designed for sale without the outer package
- made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold. For a food to be considered 'made' as well as 'packaged' on the premises, it must have been processed on the premises in a way that changed the nature of the food, before being packaged on the premises. Merely dividing and repackaging portions of food from bulk to individual smaller pieces for sale does not in itself qualify the food for a labelling exemption
- packaged in the presence of the purchaser. A retailer may sell food without a label on the package where the customer witnesses the packaging of the food as any questions about the food can be put to the person serving the food for sale
- packaged food displayed in an assisted service cabinet, which requires food to be served on request from the purchaser
- whole or cut vegetables and fruit, in a package that displays the nature and the quality of the food (sprouting seeds are excluded from this exemption)
- delivered packaged and ready for consumption at the order of the consumer
- sold at a fundraising event (see related factsheet [Food safety requirements for charitable and not-for-profit organisations](#) (PDF, 158 KB)).

Even if the food is exempt, the retailer must comply with requirements for certain warning statements and details of food that has been genetically modified or irradiated.

With the exception of the presence of royal jelly, genetically modified foods and irradiated foods require the information to be displayed in conjunction with the food or providing the information to the purchaser on request.

Enforcement

The NSW Food Authority is responsible for administering the labelling and information provisions in the Code and Food Act 2003 (NSW).

The Food Authority is **not** responsible for:

- the presence and accuracy of total weights and measures statements, which is the responsibility of the National Measurement Institute (however, the Food Authority is responsible for percentage ingredient statements)
- barcodes
- recycling codes
- composition and labelling of pet food
- therapeutic products (including dietary aids and supplements) registered by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which are governed by that agency
- country of origin labelling
- compliance with Australian Consumer Law.

As food labelling is regulated by a wide range of laws it is recommended that food businesses consider engaging a labelling consultant if they are uncertain of their obligations.

More information

- Visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- Phone 1300 552 406
- Email food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- See the labelling information detailed in [Chapter 1.2 of the Food Standards Code](#)
- Visit the Therapeutic Goods Administration's website: tga.gov.au
- Visit Australian Competition and Consumer Commission acc.gov.au

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