

FSA welcomes new allergen labelling law

The government plans to introduce the new legislation this summer which will mandate full ingredients labelling for foods which are prepacked for direct sale.

It is proposed that the new laws will come into force in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by summer 2021 – giving food businesses time to adapt to the change.

Heather Hancock said:

'I warmly welcome the Secretary of State's announcement: this is an important step forward in our ambition for the UK to become the best place in the world for people living with food hypersensitivities.

We know that the impact of food allergy and intolerance on quality of life can be as great or even greater than almost all other foodborne diseases.

While it is impossible to eliminate the risks entirely, we believe the Secretary of State's announcement of this change in the rules will mean better protection for allergic consumers.'

Protecting consumers

The announcement today is the result of a UK-wide consultation, launched in January, that sought views on updating food allergen labelling laws for foods prepacked for direct sale. It followed the tragic death of teenager Natasha Ednan-Laperouse, as a result of an allergic reaction to a baguette she had eaten which did not display allergen information on the packaging.

The FSA Board, in a public meeting held in May, agreed on advice for Ministers that full ingredient labelling should be mandatory for all pre-packed for direct sale foods.

Current laws

'Prepacked foods for direct sale' are foods that have been made and packed on the same premises from which they are being sold. For example, a packaged sandwich or salad made by staff earlier in the day and placed on a shelf for purchase.

Currently, these foods are not required to carry labels and information on allergens, as it is expected that the customer can speak with the person who made or packed the product for this information. This has led people mistakenly assuming that the food does not contain any allergens.

Many food businesses have already taken steps to improve food labelling. Others who have yet to make changes are being urged to do all they can ahead of the implementation date to help consumers make safe food choices.