

FSA seeks views on new 'May Contain' guidance

The Food Standards Agency is seeking views on new advice for how and when to apply precautionary allergen labelling (PAL), commonly seen as “may contain” warnings on food packaging.

Under the new advice, and to ensure compliance with food law, food businesses should specify which of the 14 major allergens their PAL refers to – for example, using “may contain peanuts” or “may contain tree nuts” rather than the generic “may contain nuts”.

The FSA is recommending that PAL only be applied following a risk assessment, to ensure consumer safety and choice are not unnecessarily affected.

Views are also being sought on new guidance that PAL should not be applied for the same allergen that products are also claiming to be “free-from”. This would mean that a product labelled “dairy free”, for instance, should not be labelled with a “may contain milk” statement.

The proposed changes were supported by over 90% of respondents to the [“May Contain Consultation”](#), which was launched in December 2021.

FSA Food Hypersensitivity Team Leader, Ben Rayner, said:

“While the use of PAL is voluntary, it is important that it should be as accurate and helpful to consumers as possible when it is applied.

“This new guidance will help ensure businesses and those living with food allergies and intolerances get the greatest possible benefit from PAL.

“We are committed to improving the provision of allergy information to consumers, and this is our next step in that process.”

The updated guidance also advises businesses not to use No Gluten Containing Ingredients Statements (NGCIs), such as “this menu has been designed for a non-gluten diet”. The FSA recommends that only the phrases “gluten free” or “low gluten” be used, because NGCIs have been found to mislead consumers.

Anyone wishing to respond to the consultation can do so by visiting [the consultation page](#).

The consultation closes on Monday 22 May.