

FSA backs mandatory full ingredient labelling for pre-packed direct sale food

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has today advised that increased allergen information should be provided on pre-packed direct sale food to give consumers greater confidence in the food they eat.

The Board also set out key priorities identified as part of an ambition to make the UK the best place for food hypersensitive consumers, which includes those with food allergy and intolerance.

At a public meeting, the Board agreed on advice for Ministers that full ingredient labelling should be mandatory for all pre-packed food for direct sale.

The FSA agrees with allergic consumers that full ingredient labelling would deliver a significant improvement, and greater consistency by following the same labelling system that consumers are familiar with, as found on packaged food.

The Food Standards Agency Chair, Heather Hancock said:

'Food allergies and intolerance affects millions of people and its impact can be as big or bigger than almost all other foodborne diseases.

'That is why we have concluded that more extensive food labelling is the right outcome to provide greater protection for consumers but introduced in a way that we can be confident will work.

'While it is impossible to eliminate the risks entirely, we consider that this change along with other measures we are prioritising will deliver more effective protection for allergic consumers.'

The Board also agreed that the department should lead on a range of work to promote and accelerate the sharing of best practice across the industry and improve awareness in businesses and the public.

The decision by the Board will be the basis for the formal advice provided to Ministers who will take the final decision.

FSA EXPLAINS

'Prepacked foods for direct sale' are foods that have been 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.