

## Packaging and labelling

Labelling is regulated to protect consumers who should have the correct information to make confident and informed food choices based on diet, allergies, personal taste or cost.

Everyone has the right to know that the food they have bought matches the description given on the label. Part of our role is to help prevent mislabelling or misleading descriptions of foods.

If mislabelling is done deliberately it is [criminal fraud](#), whether it poses a food safety threat or not.

Falsely describing, advertising or presenting food is an offence and there are many laws that help protect consumers against dishonest labelling and misleading descriptions.

[Labelling e-training course](#)

## Labelling food – pre-packed

All pre-packed food requires a food labelling that display certain mandatory information. All foods will be subject to general food labelling requirements and any labelling provided must be accurate and not misleading.

Certain foods are controlled by product specific regulations and they include:

- bread and flour
- cocoa and chocolate
- soluble coffee
- evaporated and dried milk
- honey
- infant formula
- jams
- meat products - sausages, burgers and pies
- natural mineral waters
- spreadable fats
- sugars
- [irradiated food](#)
- foods containing [genetic modification \(GM\)](#)

## On a food label

There are some mandatory labelling requirements for all food labels.

The requirements are:

- name of the food
- list of ingredients
- ingredients or processing aids causing allergies or intolerances that are stated in the [14 Allergens](#)
- quantity of certain ingredients or categories of ingredients
- net quantity of the food
- date of minimum durability or the 'use by' date
- special storage conditions and/or conditions of use

- name or business name and address of the food business operator
- country of origin or place of provenance
- instructions for use where it would be difficult to make appropriate use of the food in the absence of such instructions
- the alcohol strength by volume for beverages containing more than 1.2 % of alcohol, by volume
- nutritional declaration

Further information can be found in this [Waste & Resources Action Plan \(WRAP\) guidance document](#).

There are additional labelling requirements for certain food and drink products such as:

- foods containing certain gases
- foods containing sweeteners
- foods containing glycyrrhizinic acid or its ammonium salt
- beverages with high caffeine content or foods with added caffeine
- foods with added phytosterols, phytosterol esters, phytosterols or phytosterolesters
- frozen meat, frozen meat preparations and frozen unprocessed fishery products

## How mandatory information needs to be presented

A minimum font size applies to mandatory information. The font size is determined by the letter 'x' and if it is the same height or bigger than 1.2mm.

[Minimum font size for labelling](#) (99.14 KB)

Mandatory food information must be easy to see. It must also be clearly legible and be difficult to remove, where appropriate. It must not be in any way hidden, obscured, detracted from or interrupted by any other written or pictorial matter.

Mandatory details must be indicated with words and numbers. They can also be shown using pictograms and symbols.

## Non pre-packed foods

Food catering businesses do not have to label food in the same way that manufacturers and other food businesses do.

Businesses are required to provide allergen and intolerance information to customers.

[Allergen information for non-prepacked food](#), or 'loose foods' can be communicated through a variety of means to suit how you display information in your business. The requirement is to provide information about the use of allergenic ingredients in a food. You are not required to provide a full ingredients list.

## The legislation

The European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) [Regulation 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers brings together EU rules on general food labelling and nutrition labelling into one piece of legislation.

We have summary guidance for food business operators and enforcement officers in, Northern

Ireland and Wales according to the Food Information Regulations 2014.

The guidance provides non-statutory advice and should be read in alongside with Regulation 1169/2011 and the Food Information Regulations 2014 for the relevant nation.

**Northern Ireland and Wales**

[Food Information Regulation guidance](#) (273.32 KB)

[The Food Information Regulations 2014 in England](#) enables local authorities to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.

Defra provide summary [guidance for England](#)

[The Food Information Regulations 2014 in Northern Ireland](#) enables district councils in Northern Ireland to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.

[The Food Information \(Wales\) Regulations 2014 in Wales](#) enables local authorities to enforce the European Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation 1169/2011.

## Packaging wrappers

If you wrap or package food as part of your business then you must:

- use material that will not be a source of contamination for wrapping and packaging
- store wrapping materials so they are not at risk of contamination
- wrap and package the food in a way that avoids contamination of products
- make sure that any containers are clean and not damaged, particularly if you use cans or glass jars
- be able to keep the wrapping or packaging material clean

[Vacuum packaging e-training course](#)

## Surveillance and research

Occasionally, misleading descriptions can affect your health or safety. People who cannot eat certain foods because they are intolerant or allergic to them may suffer severe or life-threatening reactions.

It makes it much more difficult to avoid these foods if they have incorrect or inaccurate labels. A contaminated product could also cause illness if it was deliberately being passed off as authentic.

We also have a research programme devoted to developing new methods and techniques to support the surveillance programme.

## Food authenticity

Food authenticity is when food matches its description. Mislabelled food deceives the consumer and creates unfair competition with manufacturers or traders.

The description of food refers to the information given about its:

- name
- ingredient

- origin
- processing

If you think that a food product is not authentic, please see information on [food crime](#).