

UK food businesses report improved practices in allergen management and better safety for food hypersensitive consumers

The [findings of the research](#) reveal a dramatic improvement in provision of allergen information and better food safety for consumers. The report found:

- Better provision of allergen information: the vast majority of the 2,303 food business operators surveyed said that they provide written or verbal information about each of the 14 allergens they sell.
- Improved allergen labelling policies: 95% of food businesses said they have a written (83%) or informal policy (12%) on allergen labelling – up from 60% in 2012. This includes a large majority of market traders. Of 55 market traders surveyed, 93% had written (78%) or informal (15%) policies.
- Better checking of allergenic ingredients: almost all (99.9%) of food businesses had processes in place to check if a product contains allergenic ingredients – up from 92% in 2012. Nearly nine in ten food businesses (86%) check or audit the ingredients they obtain from suppliers and wholesalers (71% in 2012).
- More training for staff: half of food businesses had undertaken formal training on food allergens (49%), up from a third (34%) reporting this in 2012. Almost all food business operators provided staff with allergen information (99%), most commonly through verbal training (90%).

Rebecca Sudworth, FSA Director of Policy, said:

'At the FSA we want to make the UK a place where food is safe, where allergy information can be trusted and where food hypersensitive consumers are included in our food culture.'

'We are really pleased to find evidence of a shift in business practices, where allergen management has become a part of the day job, rather than an afterthought.'

'But there is still much to do. An estimated 2.6 million people are living with a diagnosed food allergy in the UK, with more people hospitalised each year because of a food allergy or intolerance than because of foodborne disease. That's why we are continuing to work with food businesses to instil understanding of allergens, and why new laws are coming in to force later in the year requiring allergen labelling on food prepacked for direct sale.'

In October 2021 [further legislation will be coming into force](#) which will require food businesses to provide allergen labelling on prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food – food that has been packed before being offered for sale on the same premises from which they are being sold, like a sandwich or salad.

This is as a result of a UK wide review following the death of teenager Natasha Ednan-Laperouse from an allergic reaction caused by a PPDS baguette which did not require allergen labelling.

Our research suggests that 64% of food businesses selling PPDS food are aware of the labelling changes that are due to come into force and 62% already provide full ingredients labelling on the PPDS food they sell.

We launched a 'one year to go' campaign in October 2020 to highlight the PPDS changes to businesses and to encourage them to check what they need to do to prepare. Over the next few months we will be working closely with food businesses to make sure they are all ready for the changes. More information can be found on the [Introduction to allergen labelling changes](#) page.

About the research

[The food industry's provision of allergen information to consumers research](#) was carried out by IFF Research on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and [Food Standards Scotland](#) (FSS). The aim was to understand the current provision of information on allergenic ingredients by food businesses to consumers for non-prepacked food, and to see how this has changed since the legislative changes which came into full force in 2014.

The study also provides a new baseline of understanding for food prepacked for direct sale (PPDS), i.e. food that has been packed before being offered for sale on the same premises from which they are being sold. This includes exploring food business operators' (FBOs) awareness and intentions in the light of new legislation coming into effect on 1 October 2021, which requires them to provide full ingredients labelling for PPDS food.