

Baseline for evaluation of EU FIC (Food Information to Consumers) labelling

Area of research interest: [Food hypersensitivity](#)
Study duration: 2014-02-10
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Project code: FS305027 (Scotland) FS514106 (N.
Conducted by: Best Food Forward Anthesis

Background

The aim of the research is to gather evidence on a UK basis regarding:

- consumer understanding and purchasing behaviour before the main requirements of the EU Food Information to Consumers Regulation (FIC) apply
- the state of readiness for businesses involved in rolling out the new labelling, both those that only operate in the UK and those whose trade crosses borders

The research will target those labelling elements of the FIC which have the biggest impact/change on current labels. Gathering baseline data on these elements will enable evaluations of impacts on businesses and consumers to take place in future.

The research is intended to provide clear baseline evidence on the current labelling landscape, investigate the possible benefits and drawbacks of the new FIC for consumers and businesses which will enable a later phase to evaluate whether the intended consequences of changes to the FIC are achieved. The transition stages for general food labelling and nutrition labelling under the FIC mean that later phases could take place from 2015 and 2017 respectively. The evidence from the baseline project will be used to inform policy makers, the UK industry and consumer groups about what labelling information is most important for consumers.

Research Approach

The Defra appointed contractors are able to carry out the following:

- accompanied shops – This would involve the contractors accompanying consumers during a ‘weekly shop’ taking account of demographics and food information aspects to be sampled e.g. food allergies. The information gathered would give an insight into actual shopping activity and the thought processes behind purchasing decisions. In England, there would be further stage involving visits to assess how labelling information is used in a home setting.
- a consumer omnibus survey – This would involve home visits in which the main shoppers in a household would be identified and asked questions on areas including: key factors in deciding which foods to purchase, whether they shop in store or online, ease of finding information about food contents and what increases confidence in food labelling. The information gathered will cover reported shopping activity.

- a business survey - This would involve contacting a mix of retail and manufacturing businesses by telephone to carry out a 10 minute survey. Businesses would be asked about the types of foods handled and their awareness of and state of readiness for the FIC changes. More specific questions on areas such as minced meat, country of origin, use of Front-of-Pack nutrition labelling would be asked as appropriate.

The key areas of the FIC are listed below. In order to focus the scope of this work, the research will concentrate on the labelling elements that will see the biggest change once the FIC comes into effect.

- country of origin/place of provenance labelling
- mandatory nutrition declaration and voluntary front of pack nutrition labelling
- ingredients and nutrition labelling of alcoholic drinks
- consumer information about non-pre-packed foods
- food allergen labelling and information
- clarity of food labels and minimum font size • labelling of vegetable oil including palm oil
- labelling of engineered nano-materials
- quantitative indication of ingredients, (QUID) (including: meat content, added water declarations) For minced meat the following additional requirements will be covered:
- minced meat, unless covered by a derogation detailed in point 3 of Annex VI part B must comply with the compositional requirements set out in the table in Annex VI part B of the FIC)
- the following expressions should appear on the label:
 1. 'percentage of fat content under ...'
 2. 'collagen/meat protein ratio under ...'