

Update: FSA provides consumer guidance as more fully refined oils may be used as ingredient substitutions?

The Food Standards Agency is advising consumers that some food products may now contain other refined or fully refined food grade vegetable oils, despite being labelled as containing sunflower oil.?

This update provides advice to consumers that fully refined palm oil, fully refined coconut oil and fully refined soybean oil are being used in some products without changes to the label being made. [We have already issued advice to consumers](#) around the use of refined rapeseed oil due to the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on product availability.?

Emily Miles, Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency said:??

"It is an absolute priority for us that food is safe, and what it says it is. If industry decisions are made around the substitutions of these oils, we expect accurate labels to be prepared and printed as soon as possible so that consumers can be confident in the food they buy. Any inaccuracies in labelling must only be temporary. We are working closely with industry to raise awareness among consumers of any potential changes to ingredients.

"We have carried out a rapid risk assessment on three fully refined oils that the food industry is proposing to use in a variety of products to replace sunflower oil, supplies of which are being restricted by the war in Ukraine. The risk assessment focuses on people with a food allergy, and the immediate food risk from fully refined palm oil and fully refined coconut oil is very low and for fully refined soybean oil it is negligible, which means that allergic reactions to these fully refined vegetable oils are very rare and - if they do occur - are?mild."

We encourage industry to consider using the healthier and more sustainable oils from this list if substituting their ingredients. Consumers should contact the manufacturer or brand for more information if they are unsure of the content of any product or have concerns about substitution."?

Guidance has been issued to local authorities on the factors they may wish to take into consideration to assist in making proportionate enforcement decisions on a case-by-case basis and bearing in mind the wider consumer interests.?

[The?rapid allergen risk assessment for these oils?has been published](#) as part of our commitment to making public the science and evidence underpinning our advice and guidance.??

Where substitute oils are used, the FSA expects businesses to inform consumers about any related product change, whether that product is purchased in store or online, using, for example, point of sale notices and information on their websites.?

How the FSA informs decision making on sunflower oil substitutions??

When considering alternative oils which can be used as a replacement for sunflower oil in these extraordinary circumstances, the FSA has applied a number of tests to determine if a proportionate enforcement approach should be taken to labelling inaccuracies arising from temporary substitution of ingredients.

[These provisional tests](#) have been developed to support decision making going forward around interim measures to support the food supply chain and these tests will help ensure food is safe, consumer interests are protected and, the food supply chain is not disrupted.

The FSA Board is aware of the situation and will be keeping it under review, including industry's progress back to compliance.