

Update 3: FSA and FSS issue further guidance on the use of oils as ingredient substitutions

The Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland are updating consumers and businesses about refined or fully refined food grade vegetable oils that may be being used instead of sunflower oil in some food products, despite them being labelled as containing sunflower oil.

This update adds fully refined corn (maize) oil to [previously issued advice to consumers](#) that refined rapeseed oil, fully refined palm oil, fully refined coconut oil and fully refined soyabean oil may be used to replace sunflower oil in some products temporarily without this being reflected on labelling.

The [rapid risk assessment report](#) underpinning our advice has also been published.

Our findings show that the risk of allergic reactions from the substitute oils on the list 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.

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

"People must be confident that the food they buy is safe and what it says it is.

"We recognise the current circumstances over the supply of oils for food products are challenging. That is why we have given the food industry time to sort out accurate labelling for food products where certain oils have been substituted. This approach is only being taken where the risk of adverse reactions to the substitute oils is very low or negligible, and where the food business has shown they will be correcting the situation quickly.

"Today we have added corn oil to the list of oils included in our advice because it is a healthier alternative than some of the other oils we had previously listed. We are also reminding businesses to use healthier and more sustainable oils if substituting.

"We continue to expect food businesses to make sure consumers are aware of any potential oil substitutions that are not reflected on the label, such as through point-of-sale notices and information on their websites.

"As we have said previously, we expect the food industry to work rapidly towards meeting their regulatory labelling obligations, so that consumers can have food they can trust."

The rapid risk assessment includes information on the allergy risk associated with a wide range of oils. This information is being published for reasons of transparency, and for the benefit of food manufacturers and processors.

Our temporary approach to inaccurate labelling only applies in the case of the substitution of sunflower oil with five oils: refined rapeseed oil, fully refined palm oil, fully refined coconut oil, fully refined soyabean oil and fully refined corn (maize) oil. This applies only to products like crisps, breaded fish, frozen vegetables and chips where sunflower oil is used as an ingredient and not to whole bottles of sunflower oil. Oils other than the five listed above can be used as substitutes for sunflower oil in products, but labelling inaccuracies are not permitted so their presence must be reflected on labelling.

The FSA Board will be discussing the FSA's response to supply chain disruptions at its meeting on 15 June.