



Guideline Labelling of Food Products

SCOPE

The purpose of this guideline is to assist food businesses to meet the labelling requirements under the Food Standards Code. In most circumstances packaged foods for retail sale are required to have a label that provides all of the information below -

1. The name of the food

Packaged foods must be labelled with a name or a description that will not mislead consumers. For some foods the Code defines the name of a food as a *prescribed name* and that name must appear on the label, e.g. honey, formulated supplementary sports food.

2. The lot identification

The lot is required on packaged food to assist in the rare event of a food recall. A lot number should identify the batch from which the food was manufactured. These requirements can be satisfied if the product is properly date marked with a best before date.

3. Name and business address in Australia

For food recall and contact purposes the label must include the name and business address of the manufacturer, packer, vendor or importer of the food. The address must include the street number, the street name, the town or suburb and, the state or territory. A post office box address is not sufficient.

4. Nutrition information panel

Generally all packaged food labels must include a nutrition information panel.

The only exceptions to this requirement are: *foods sold at fundraising events; small packages; fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry or fish sold as single ingredients; alcoholic beverages; herbs, herbal infusion and spices; vinegar; salt; tea and coffee; gelatine; defined additives or processing aids; water including mineral and spring water; jam setting compound; kits for producing alcoholic beverages; kava and sandwiches, rolls, bagels and similar products.*

For foods which require a nutrition information panel, the following is an example of a standard format:

Packet of 4 frozen pies		Nutrition information	
Servings per package - 4 Serving size - 175g			
		Quantity per 175g serving	Quantity per 100g
Example 1	Energy	1615kJ	923kJ
	Protein	25.9g	14.8g
	Fat		
	- Total	20.6g	11.8g
	- Saturated	10.0g	5.76g
	Carbohydrate	23.6g	13.5g
	- Sugars	1.2g	0.7g
	Sodium	471mg	269mg

The Food Standards website provides an online tool to calculate nutrition information panel values. Go to www.foodstandards.gov.au and type *Nutrition Panel Calculator* into the search box.

5. Ingredient listing

The label must list all the ingredients and compound ingredients (including food additives) used in the manufacture of the food. A compound ingredient means an ingredient of a food that is itself made up of two or more ingredients, e.g. spaghetti, which is made up of flour, egg and water. Ingredients must be listed in descending order of weight. This means that the ingredient present in the greatest proportion is listed first and so on.

6. Characterising ingredients (percentage labelling)

There are some exemptions but generally characterising ingredients must be declared on the label as a percentage of the food. The 'characterising ingredients' are mentioned in the name of the product or highlighted on the label. The amount of that food present in the product is expressed as a percentage. For example, a 'meat pie' the characterising ingredient is meat and the label must state the percentage of meat in the pie, as in the example below:

Example	Ingredient label from a "meat pie"
	<p>INGREDIENTS</p> <p>WHEAT FLOUR, MEAT (MINIMUM 25%), WATER, ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE FAT, ONION POWDER, HYDROLYSED VEGETABLE PROTEIN, EGG, THICKENER (410), SUGAR, MINERAL SALT (450), SALT, COLOUR (150a), HERBS, PRESERVATIVE (223).</p>

7. Mandatory warning and advisory statements and declarations

Mandatory advisory and warning information is required on the labels of the following foods:

- Foods purposely enriched with phytosterols (plant oils)
- Unpasteurised milk and unpasteurised milk products;
- Unpasteurised or uncooked egg products;
- Some milk, evaporated or dried milk and some equivalent beverages or products made from soy or cereals.

Mandatory advisory statements are required on the labels of the following foods or *when present as an ingredient in food*:

- Bee pollen or propolis;
- Cereal based beverages;
- Kola drinks with added caffeine;
- Aspartame;
- Quinine;
- Guarana or extracts of guarana; and
- Lactitol, maltitol, xylitol, mannitol, sorbitol, erythritol, isomaltol, and polydextrose above certain limits.

8. Declaration of certain substances

Certain ingredients that may cause a reaction in some consumers must be declared (including when present as a processing aid). These ingredients are:

- cereals containing gluten;
- crustacean and fish
- egg;
- milk;
- tree nuts;
- sesame seed;
- peanuts;
- caffeine;
- soybeans, and
- sulphite additives when present at more than 10mg/kg

Listing any of the above foods in the ingredient list is sufficient to satisfy this requirement.

9. Date marking

Generally, all packaged food with a life of 2 years or less must show a date-mark. The date that you use can be determined by laboratory testing or by experimenting yourself with shelf life and keeping records.

The "BEST BEFORE" form of date mark will be used on most packaged foods. A food with a 'BEST BEFORE' date mark can be sold after that date has expired, provided it is safe and suitable for consumption. If you believe that for health and safety reasons a food should not be consumed after a certain date the "USE BY" form of date mark must be used. Foods labelled "USE BY" cannot be sold after the date shown.

10. Directions for use or storage

Any *storage conditions* that are necessary to ensure that a food will keep for the period indicated by the date mark must be shown. For example, Store below 5°C, refrigerate after opening, store in a cool dry place etc.

11. Country of Origin

A label on a package of food must include a statement that identifies the country in which the food was made or produced or that the product is made from local and/or imported ingredients.

Most manufacturers use either "PRODUCT OF" or "MADE IN".

PRODUCT OF AUSTRALIA – the origin of each significant ingredient is from Australia and the production processes occurred in Australia;

MADE IN AUSTRALIA – the nature of the food was substantially transformed in Australia and at least 50% of the production cost was in Australia. An alternative claim may be MADE IN AUSTRALIA FROM LOCAL AND IMPORTED INGREDIENTS

Whole or cut fruit and vegetables must display a Country of Origin statement on the package (if packaged) or on signs.

What foods are exempt from bearing a label?

- Food for retail sale or catering purposes (foods for use in restaurant, schools, canteens, caterers or self-catering institutions where food is offered for immediate consumption) where the food is not in a package, e.g. food on a plate for immediate consumption.
- Food in an inner package not designed for individual sale, e.g. cellophane wrapped crackers;
- Food made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold, e.g. from a sandwich bar, butchery or take away food premises;
- Food packaged in the presence of the purchaser, e.g. from a bulk food bin, a delicatessen or self-serve salad bar;
- Whole or cut fresh fruit and vegetables in packaging (not including sprouting seeds or similar products) as long as the packaging does not obscure the food, e.g. cut fruit in clear plastic wrap;
- Delivered packaged and ready for consumption at the express order of the purchaser, e.g. pizza delivery;
- Food sold at a fundraising event, i.e. sold at the event and funds raised are solely for community or charitable purposes and not for personal gain;

Please note: Even when exempt from bearing a label, certain information about a food must be available to the consumer, either verbally or in writing, at the point of sale.

Further information

This is a guideline only. For more information please contact Health Services on 9727 0222. Food Standards Australia New Zealand publishes a user guide to food labelling and provides specific and detailed information on labelling requirements at www.foodstandards.gov.au.