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Food labelling in the EU: Clear information for safe choices

The European Union has established clear and comprehensive food labelling rules to help consumers make informed and safe choices. These rules protect public health, prevent misleading practices, and ensure transparency and consistency across the EU food market.

What information is mandatory?

All prepacked food sold in the EU must display the following information in a clear and visible manner

**Product name**

accurately describing the nature of the food

**Date marking**

either “best before” (for quality) or “use by” (for safety)

**Ingredients list**

in descending order of weight, including additives and allergens

**Storage conditions and instructions for use**

to maintain safety and quality

**Allergen information**

any of the 14 main allergens must be highlighted using a distinct font, style or background

**Nutrition declaration**

including energy value (kJ/kcal), fats, saturated fats, carbohydrates, sugars, protein, and salt

**Net quantity**

indicated by weight or volume

**Country of origin**

required for certain foods such as fresh meat (pigs, sheep, goats, poultry), fish, and specific fruits and vegetables

Special labelling requirements

Some products must carry additional information to ensure clarity and avoid misleading consumers. These include:

- Date of freezing – for frozen meat, meat preparations, and unprocessed frozen fishery products
- Added water – declared if it exceeds 5% of the product's weight in foods resembling fresh meat or fish
- Formed meat or fish – must indicate if composed of combined pieces rather than a single cut
- Added proteins – must be declared when different from the product's animal origin
- Defrosted products – must be labelled as such if sold thawed
- Vegetable oils – the specific type and origin must be indicated (e.g. sunflower oil, palm oil)
- Engineered nanomaterials – labelled with “nano” in brackets after the ingredient name
- Substitute ingredients – declared near the product name if an expected ingredient has been replaced



Online orders and unpackaged food

The same labelling requirements apply to food sold online as to those sold in shops. Consumers must have access to all mandatory information before purchase.

For non-prepacked food, such as in restaurants, cafés or markets, allergen information must be provided. This can be given orally, but there must be a clear indication of how consumers can obtain it, and it must be available in written form on request.