

Food Labelling Requirements for Packaged Foods

When packaging for display and sale, the packaging must be labelled in accordance with the Food Standards Code, Volume 2. The requirements of the Code change from time to time and certain foods have specific requirements. It is **essential** that you submit a draft of your label to Councils Environmental Department before you go to print to ensure you have included all the necessary information. In general the basic information required is:

1. Name of Food

Foods must be labelled with an accurate name or description that indicates the true nature of the food. Names or descriptions must not mislead consumers.

2. Lot Identification

Labels must have the food's batch identification. This requirement is usually satisfied if the product is properly date marked.

3. Name and Address of Supplier

Food products must be labelled with the name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the manufacturer, packer, vendor or importer of food. A full business address is required. A post office box or similar address is not adequate.

4. Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations

The main foods, food ingredients or components of an ingredient that can cause in some individuals severe adverse reactions – such as peanuts and other nuts, seafood, fish, milk, gluten, eggs and soybeans – must be declared on the label however small the amount. This **declaration** is usually in the ingredients list.

There must also be an **advisory statement** on the label of products that contain certain ingredients such as unpasteurised milk, unpasteurised egg, aspartame, quinine, caffeine in cola beverages and guarana and phytoserol esters. **Warning statements** are needed where people may be unaware of a severe health risk posed by an allergen in a food such as royal jelly.

5. Labelling of Ingredients

Ingredients must be listed from greatest to smallest by ingoing weight including added water. Where there are very small amounts of multi-component ingredients, (under5%) it is permitted to list the 'composite' ingredient only, for example the chocolate (rather the cocoa, cocoa butter and sugar) in a choc chip cookie or the tomato sauce (rather than tomatoes, capsicum, onions,

from the **mountains** to the sea

herbs) on a frozen pizza. This does not apply to any additive or allergen, which must be listed however small the amount.

Food additives must be identified, usually by a number, and included in the ingredients list. This allows those people that may be sensitive to food additives to avoid them.

6. Date Marking

Foods with a shelf life of less than two years must have a '**best before**' date. It may still be safe to eat those foods after the best before date but they may have lost quality and some nutritional value. Those foods that should not be consumed after a certain date for health and safety reasons must have a '**use by**' date. An exception is bread, which can be labelled with a '**baked on**' or '**baked for**' date if its shelf life is less than seven days.

7. Directions for Use and Storage

Where specific storage conditions are required in order for a product to keep until its 'use-by' or 'best before' date, or directions for the use and storage of the food are required for health and safety reasons, this information must be included on the label.

8. Nutrition Information Requirements

Food labels must contain a nutrition panel. There are a few exceptions such as very small packages and foods like herbs and spices, tea, coffee and foods sold unpackaged (if a nutrition claim is not made) or foods made and packaged at the point of sale.

A Nutrition Panel Calculator can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.au

9. Percentage Labelling

Packaged foods must also carry labels which show the percentage of key ingredients or components in the food, if they are present. An example of a percentage of a key component is the amount of strawberries in strawberry yogurt. In some foods, such as plain bread, there are no key ingredients.

10. Country of Origin

Packaged, and some unpackaged, foods must state the country where the food was made or processed. This could just be identifying the country where the food was packaged for retail sale and, if any of the ingredients do not originate from that country, a statement that the food is made from imported or local and imported ingredients.

11. Legibility Requirements

Labels must be legible, with prominent type, which is distinct from the background, and in English. The type in warning statements must be at least 3mm high, except on very small packages.

Other Requirements

Suppliers must label food products with accurate minimum weights and measures information.

Fair Trading and Food Laws require labels that do not mislead. For example, if the label says it is strawberry yogurt then it must contain strawberries.

Foods that have been processed by ionising radiation or have been produced or contain ingredients that have been produced using gene technology have additional labelling requirements.

There may also be other specific requirements that apply to the food you wish to package.

If you have any questions please contact Councils Environmental Health Department on 03 6376 7900 during normal business hours.