

# Food labelling



## Environmental Health

The purpose of this guideline is to assist food businesses to meet the labelling requirements under the Food Standards Code.

## Information a food label must contain



### 1. Nutrition information panel

The nutrition information panel details the quantity of basic nutrients in the food, per service and also per 100g of that food.

The FSANZ website provides an online tool to calculate nutrition information panel values <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/npc/Pages/Nutrition-Panel-Calculator-introduction.aspx>

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.*

## 2. Percentage labelling

Food labels must show the percentages of the key or characterising ingredients in the product, if the key ingredient is mentioned in the food description. This allows similar foods to be compared. The characterising ingredient for the strawberry yoghurt example above, is strawberry and the ingredient list states that it contains 7% strawberries.

The percentage declaration is calculated on the basis of the ingoing weight of the characterising ingredient or component.

## 3. Food identification

To help identify a food, food labels must show:

- the name of the food
- the name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the supplier of the food
- the lot identification of the food

The name or description of the food must reflect its true nature (e.g. strawberry yoghurt must contain strawberries). If the yoghurt contained strawberry flavouring rather than real fruit, then the name would need to indicate that it is strawberry-flavoured yoghurt. The name and description should be clear enough so you can tell it apart from other foods.

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.

The label must include the name and business address of the supplier. The term supplier includes the manufacturer, packer, vendor or importer of the food in Australia. The address must include the street number, the street name, the town or suburb and the state or territory. A post office box is not acceptable.

A lot identification is used to identify:

- the batch from which the food was manufactured
- where the food was packed and/or prepared

This information is especially important if there is a food safety issue which leads to a food recall. A date mark and the supplier's address details are generally enough to meet this requirement. Some food items are exempt from lot identification, including:

- individual portions of ice cream/ ice confection
- food in small packages when the bulk packages or container in which the food is stored or displayed for sale includes lot identification

## 4. Information for people with food allergies or intolerances

Some food ingredients and substances can cause severe allergic reactions and must be declared when:

- given to a buyer on request
- displayed next to the food
- included on the packaging

If a food product contains any of the following substances, then a declaration must be made:

peanuts, tree nuts (e.g. cashews, almonds, and walnuts), crustacea (e.g. prawns), fish and fish products, milk and milk products, egg and egg products, sesame, soybeans, cereals containing

gluten and their products, namely wheat, oats, barley, rye and spelt, sulphites (if added at 10mg or more per kg of food)



Warning statements are required for foods containing royal jelly. Food or food products containing bee pollen or propolis can also cause allergic reactions and therefore must bear a warning statement.

Prescribed warning and advisory statements are specified in Standard 1.2.3 – Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations. Refer to the FSANZ fact sheets and user guides for more details.

## 5. Date marking

Packaged foods with a shelf life of 2 years or less must be date marked with either a:

- best before date – this means that the food may still be safe to eat but may have lost some of its quality
- use-by date – this means a food is not safe to eat after a certain date. Food labelled with a use-by date cannot be sold after that date.

The date that you use can be determined by laboratory testing or by experimenting yourself with shelf life and keeping records.

## 6. Ingredient list

Unless specifically exempted, a food package label must list all:

- ingredients (this means any substance, including a food additive, used in the preparation, manufacture or handling of a food)
- compound ingredients (an ingredient made up of 2 or more ingredients, such as spaghetti which is made up of flour, egg and water)

Ingredients must be listed in descending order of ingoing weight. This means that the ingredient present in the greatest proportion is listed first and so on.

## 7. Labels must tell the truth

Under Australian and New Zealand consumer laws, labels must not be false, misleading or deceptive. Suppliers must also label foods with accurate weights and measures information. The National Measurement Institute ([www.measurement.gov.au](http://www.measurement.gov.au)) ensure that correct weight and measurement information is used on food labels.

## 8. Food additives

Food additives must be identified in the ingredient list, usually by their class name (e.g. 'thickener' or 'colour') followed by the food additive name or number. A thickener has been used in this yoghurt and is labelled as 'thickener (1442)'. A full list of food additive names and numbers is available from [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)

## 9. Directions for use or storage

Where specific storage conditions are required for a food to keep until its best-before or use-by date, those conditions must be included on the label. Examples of such directions are 'refrigerate after opening' or 'store away from sunlight'.

If the food must be used in accordance with certain direction for health or safety reasons, those directions must be included on the label.

## 10. Legibility requirements

Any labelling requirements must be in English, be legible and prominent so as to contrast distinctly with the background on the label

The type size of warning statements must be no less than 3mm high or not less than 1.5mm for small packages.

## 11. Country of origin

The country of origin of packaged and some unpackaged foods must be stated on the label. Read more about country of origin labelling on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission website at [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au). The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science also provide tools and guides to assist with country of origin food labelling requirements <http://www.foodlabels.industry.gov.au/>

### Exempt foods

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) is exempt from labelling where the food is:

- not in a package;
- in an inner package not designed for individual sale;
- made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold. For a food to be considered 'made' as well as 'packaged' on the premises, it must have been processed on the premises in a way that has changed the nature of the food, before packaging the food on the premises. Merely dividing and repackaging portions of food from bulk to individual smaller pieces for sale does not in itself qualify the food for a labelling exemption;
- packaged in the presence of the purchaser – so that any questions about the food can be put to the person serving the food for sale;
- packaged food in an assisted service cabinet which requires food to be served on request from the purchaser;
- whole or cut fresh fruit and vegetables in packaging that does not obscure the nature or quality (does not include sprouting seeds or similar products);
- delivered packaged and ready for consumption at the express order of the purchaser;
- sold at a fundraising event.

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 simple guide. Labelling is complex and you are advised to consult the FSANZ user guides for detailed requirements:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/labelling/Pages/default.aspx>

## Label assessment

Section 1: do the retail labelling requirements apply	y	n	comments
is the food for retail sale?			
is the food not for retail sale but sold as suitable for retail sale without any further processing, packaging or labelling?			
If the answer is 'no' to both questions, this assessment does not apply			
Section 2: is a retail label required?	y	n	comments
is the food unpackaged?			
is the food made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold?			
is the food packaged in the presence of the purchaser?			
for whole or cut fresh fruit and vegetables (other than seed sprouts and similar), is it in a package that does not obscure the nature or quality of the food?			
is the food delivered packaged, and ready for consumption, at the express order of the purchaser?			
is the food sold at a fund-raising event?			
is the food displayed in an assisted service display cabinet*?			
if there are no 'yes' answers above, a retail label is required			
Section 3: Retail food label requirements with Food Standards Code reference	y	n	comments
Name of the food (1.2.2 – 2)			
Lot identification (1.2.2 – 3)			
Name and address of the supplier (1.2.2 – 4)			
Advisory statements, warning statements and declarations (1.2.3 – 2 to 4)			
Statement of ingredients (1.2.4 – 2)			
Date marking information (1.2.5 – 3)			
Storage conditions and directions for use (1.2.6 -2)			
Information relating to nutrition, health and related claims (1.2.7 – 26(4))			
Nutrition information panel (1.2.8 - 5)			
Information about characterising ingredients and characterising components (1.2.10 – 3)			
Section 4: Other general label requirements	y	n	comments
The label must not be altered, removed, erased, obliterated or obscured except to make corrections (1.2.1 - 22)			
General legibility – including warning statements minimum type 3mm (or 1.5mm for small packages) (Code 1.2.1 – 24 and 1.2.1 – 25)			
Country of origin – see <a href="http://www.accc.gov.au">www.accc.gov.au</a>			
Net weights and measurements – see <a href="http://www.measurement.gov.au">www.measurement.gov.au</a>			

\* assisted service display cabinet means an enclosed or semi-enclosed display cabinet which requires a person to serve the food as requested by the purchaser