



Act on Food Safety

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Food Labelling

Food labels are an important source of information for consumers about the contents of the food they eat. Consumers expect the labelling on food to be a true description of what they are buying.

All food sold in Australia must comply with the labelling requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code). Information must be available regarding the safety and suitability of the food to be consumed. The Code is available on the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) website at www.foodstandards.gov.au

Advertisements for a food must not contain any statement, information, design or representation that is prohibited by the Code.

Labels must be legible and easy to read. A food label must be in English. Other languages can be used in addition to English, as long as they do not contradict the information.

The label on a package of food for retail sale or for catering purposes must generally include the following core information.

- 1. Prescribed name:** the name of the food, to identify it or, where no name is prescribed, a name or a description of the food sufficient to indicate the true nature of the food.
- 2. Lot identification:** identifies the premises where the food was packaged and/or prepared and the batch it came from, to assist in case of a food recall.
- 3. Name and business address:** the name and address of the supplier and business in Australia

who can be contacted if more information about the product is needed.

- 4. Mandatory warning:** mandatory warning statements, advisory statements and declarations to identify certain ingredients/substances that may trigger allergies or be of concern.
- 5. List of ingredients:** ingredient list in descending order of in-going weight including any food additives, such as preservatives, flavours and colours, which are identified by their function and name, or code number (e.g. Thickener [pectin] or Thickener [440]).

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Amount Per Serving		As Packaged
Serving Size 1/2 cup (54 grams) (makes about 1 cup prepared) Servings per Container about 12 about 2 servings (cups) per bag 6 bags per container		
Calories		
Calories from Fat		190
Total Fat 0g	% Daily Value*	0
Saturated Fat 0g		0%
Trans Fat 0g		0%
Cholesterol 0mg		0%
Sodium 0mg		0%
Total Carbohydrate 43g		14%
Dietary Fiber 0g		0%
Sugars 0g		0%

6. Date marking: is needed for most packaged food with a shelf life of less than two years.

7. Nutrition information panel: to allow comparison of the quantities of seven key nutrients per serving and per 100gm.

8. Characterising ingredient declaration (Percentage labelling): Characterising ingredients or components must be declared as a percentage of the food.

9. Directions for use or storage: where, for reasons of public health and safety, consumers need appropriate directions for use or storage of the food.

10. Country of origin: identifies the country in which the food was made or produced.

Fair trading regulations require that accurate minimum weights and measures information be on the label.

FSANZ has been collecting food recall data since 1990. Data collected on food recalls can be used to identify common trends and problems occurring in the food industry. From 1990–2007 there were 162 labelling related recalls. In 2007, out of a total of 54 recalls, labelling errors accounted for 13 recalls. To access food recall statistics go to www.foodstandards.gov.au

Date marking provis

In this issue we look at date marking in detail. The date marking provisions are set out in *Standard 1.2.5 — Date Marking of Packaged Food* — of the Code. It is the manufacturer's responsibility to determine which date marking term should be used on their foods. A User Guide to date marking has been written to assist manufacturers with this process.

What is date marking?

Date marking standard applies to all packaged food that has a shelf life of two years or less and is for retail sale or for catering purposes (i.e. food for use in restaurants, canteens, or self-catering institutions and offered for immediate consumption). Date marking is also required for food sold (that is not for retail sale or for catering purposes) where the purchaser requests the information.

Date marking provides valuable information to consumers on the quality of the product they are purchasing. Specifically, it offers a practical guide to consumers on the estimated length of time during which a product will retain certain expected characteristics relating to quality. This means the length of time a food should keep before it begins to deteriorate.

For some food, the date mark will also indicate the period of time the food will remain safe to eat.

Date marks and storage instructions

There are prescribed forms for date marks and dates, and requirements to include statements of specific storage conditions on labels of packaged food.

Any storage conditions that are necessary to ensure that a food will retain its specific qualities for the period indicated by the date mark must be declared on the label.

Safety-related storage instructions are required on certain food products in conjunction with date marks to guide handling of the food so that its safety or quality is not jeopardised before the date mark expires.

Pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *Listeria* can grow to levels that may cause illness if the food is not stored correctly. These instructions may also indicate how to store the food once the package is opened (e.g. 'Refrigerate after opening').

What do the different date marks mean?

Food has to be date marked with the prescribed statement '**best-before**' unless the food needs to be eaten within a certain period for health or safety reasons. In this circumstance the prescribed statement '**use-by**' date must be applied.

Instead of a '**best-before**' date, the '**baked-on**' (or '**Bkd On**') or '**baked-for**' (or '**Bkd For**') dates may be used on a package of bread with a shelf life of less than seven days.

New standard for meat pies

Meat pie food standard was gazetted in October 2007 by FSANZ.

The new definition of a **meat pie** is: **meat pie** means a pie containing no less than 250 g/kg of meat flesh. **Meat flesh** means the skeletal muscle of any slaughtered animal, and any attached - animal rind; and fat; and connective tissue; and nerve; and blood; and blood vessels; and skin, in the case of poultry.



ions on food labels

What is a 'best-before' date?

A 'best-before' date is the last date on which a food can be expected to retain all of its quality attributes, provided that it has been stored in accordance with any stated storage conditions. Quality attributes include things such as colour, taste, texture and flavour, as well as any specific qualities for which express or implied claims have been made. For example, the freshness of the food or certain vitamin levels.

Examples of where 'best-before' would be used include shelf stable foods (e.g. biscuits, confectionery, canned foods), frozen foods, most raw foods that will be cooked before eaten (e.g. meat, chicken, fish) or foods that will noticeably spoil before becoming unsafe.

A food that has passed its 'best-before' date may still be safe to consume, but its quality may have diminished.

Foods that are date marked as 'best-before' can be sold after the date has passed, provided the food is otherwise fit for human consumption.

What is a 'use-by' date?

A 'use-by' date is the last date on which the food may be consumed safely, provided that it has been stored in accordance with any stated storage conditions. After this date, the food should not be consumed because of health or safety reasons.

If a manufacturer believes 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' must not be sold after the date has expired. **It is illegal to sell food which has passed its 'use-by' date.**

The 'use-by' date is restricted to those foods where there may be a health or safety issue. This enables

these foods to be readily identified by consumers as being different to foods date marked with a 'best-before' date.

However, it should be noted that it is an offence under *Food Act 2001* to sell food that is damaged, deteriorated or perished at any time, regardless of whether the food is within its specified date mark or not.

There are some circumstances where a food is exempt from these labelling requirements. *Standard 1.2.1 — Application of Labelling and Other Information Requirements* — of the Code describes the circumstances where food for retail sale or for catering purposes may be exempt from bearing a label.

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



FSANZ Consumer Attitudes Survey

According to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Consumer Attitudes Survey launched in April 2008, 33% of respondents who had a role in grocery shopping reported that they 'always' referred to labelling information when purchasing a product for the first time. The

best-before/use-by date, the amount of fat and the country of origin were the top three types of information on a food label most commonly looked for. The majority of Australians expressed confidence in their ability to make an informed decision from the information provided on food labels. For the full report visit http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/Consumer%20Attitudes%20Survey.pdf

New standard regarding food safety programs for vulnerable population

Food businesses that process food for service to vulnerable persons will be required to have food safety programs in place by **5 October 2008**. This includes contracted food businesses that supply food served to vulnerable persons.

A food safety program requires businesses to identify potential food safety hazards, implement and document measures that will control those hazards, and keep written records to demonstrate compliance with the food safety program.

This requirement is determined by *Standard 3.3.1 – Food Safety Programs for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons* — of the Code. Standard 3.3.1 defines

a vulnerable person as a person who is in care in a facility listed below:

- acute care hospitals;
- psychiatric hospitals;
- nursing homes for the aged;
- hospices;
- same day establishments for chemotherapy and renal dialysis services;
- respite care establishments for the Aged;
- same day aged care establishments;
- low care aged care establishments; and
- childcare centres.

A copy of Standard 3.3.1 is available at http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/Standard_3_3_1_FSPs_%20Vulnerable_pops_v95.pdf

Food safety posters

The Health Protection Service has developed posters for food businesses on hand washing; storing food in the fridge; and temperatures for food. If you would like to obtain copies of the posters, please contact the Health Protection Service on 6205 1700.



NOTE Information in this newsletter is intended as a summary only and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all the provisions of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code and Food Act 2001, not just the contents of this newsletter. Please contact the Health Protection Service on 6205 1700 for more information on any of the articles in this newsletter or questions regarding food safety. We welcome and look forward to your feedback.

ENGLISH	If you need interpreting help, telephone:
ARABIC	: إذا احتجت لمساعدة في الترجمة الشفوية ، إتصل برقم الهاتف :
CHINESE	如果你需要传译员的帮助，请打电话：
CROATIAN	Ako trebate pomoć tumača telefonirajte:
GREEK	Αν χρειάζεστε διερμηνέα τηλεφωνήστε στο
ITALIAN	Se avete bisogno di un interprete, telefonate al numero:
PERSIAN	: اگر به ترجمه شفاهی احتیاج دارید به این شماره تلفن کنید:
PORTUGUESE	Se você precisar da ajuda de um intérprete, telefone:
SERBIAN	Ако вам је потребна помоћ преводноца телефонирајте:
SPANISH	Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete, llame al:
TURKISH	Tercümana ihtiyacınız varsa lütfen telefon ediniz:
VIETNAMESE	Nếu bạn cần một người thông-ngôn hãy gọi điện-thoại:

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