

Food labels allow consumers to make logical and healthier choices with their food options. In Australia, all food labels must comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (“the Code”).

This guide is intended to provide food businesses with a basic overview of the labelling requirements that apply to packaged food for retail sale. This guide does not cover all the requirements of the Code, and does not cover any exceptions that may exist. For further information, please refer to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand website (FSANZ): www.foodstandards.gov.au where you can access the Code and additional ‘User Guides’.

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Labelling Requirements – Packaged Food

1. Name and Description of Food

Packaged foods must bear a label with the name or description of that food – the label must not mislead consumers. There are some foods that already have a prescribed name under the Code, and must be labelled according to this name e.g. honey or infant formula products.

2. Recall Information

Food labels are required to include the full name and address of the supplier, plus the lot and/or batch identification number that will assist in the event of a food recall.

Vending machines from where food is sold must display the name and business address of the supplier in a clearly noticeable place.

3. Ingredients List

Any substance, including food additives, which has been used in the preparation, manufacturing or handling of food for retail sale is an ingredient and must be listed in the statement of ingredients. The only exemptions to this rule are:

- Where the statement of ingredients is the same as the name of the food e.g. 100% orange juice.
- Water presented in packaged form.

- Alcoholic beverages.
- When food is within a small package – surface area of less than 100cm²

The label must list the ingredients from greatest to smallest by weight (including any added water). Shown below is an example of this:

<p>Apricot Spread</p> <p>Ingredients: Apricots (55%), Grape and Date Juice Concentrates, Fruit Pectin, Lemon Juice</p>

Compound ingredients (an ingredient made from other ingredients) can either be shown individually on the list or listed in descending order after the name of the compound ingredient e.g. Cheese (14%) (Milk Solids, Salt). However, where there are small amounts of compound ingredients (under 5%) labels can list the composite ingredient e.g. Worcestershire Sauce, rather than list all the ingredients in the sauce itself.

4. Characterising Ingredients (Percentage Labelling)

Within ingredient lists you will sometimes see a percentage in brackets next to an ingredient e.g. Apricots (55%). This is called characterising ingredient labelling and shows the proportion of the ingredient/component included in your product i.e. what percentage of your Apricot Spread is apricot.

In the case of food additives, the additive must be declared by class name and number following, or by class name and prescribed name following - for example: Colour (132) **or** Colour (Indigotine).

5. Allergen, Mandatory & Advisory Statements

Mandatory declaration of certain foods or substances in food:

Where certain foods or substances in food are present, the Code states that their presence must be declared e.g. peanuts. For a current list of these foods/substances, refer to Standard 1.2.3 – 4 of the Code.

Mandatory warning statement:

For food that is or contains as an ingredient royal jelly, a mandatory warning statement is required. The wording of the warning statement is set by the Food Standards Code (see Standard 1.2.3 – 3).

Mandatory advisory statements:

Mandatory advisory statements are required for certain foods. For example, if food contains sorbitol either alone or in combination, at a level of or in excess of 25g/100g, an advisory statement to the effect that excess consumption may have a laxative effect is required.

The wording for mandatory advisory statements can be found in Standard 1.2.3 - 2 and Schedule 9 of the Code.

6. Date Marking

Generally, packaged foods with a shelf life of less than two years must be date marked. A variety of canned foods are not date marked, as they are safe and keep their quality for longer than two years.

Any specific storage conditions to ensure a food product remains safe to consume must be included on the label e.g. 'Keep refrigerated after opening'.

Best Before Date:

Is the date up to which the quality of the food is guaranteed providing its packaging remains intact during storage and it is stored in accordance with the manufacturer's storage conditions.

Use-By Date:

Is the date after which it is estimated that the food for sale should not be consumed because of health and safety reasons providing its packaging remains intact during storage and it is stored in accordance with the manufacturer's storage conditions.

Baked-on/Baked-for Date:

Bread with a shelf life of seven days or less, can be labelled with a baked-on or a baked-for date.

7. Country of Origin

A label must bear a statement that identifies the country where the food was made, produced or grown e.g. Product of Italy.

Alternatively, the statement on the package needs to identify the country where the food was made or packaged and that it contains imported ingredients or contains local and imported ingredients e.g. Made in Australia from local and imported ingredients.

As of 1 July 2018, new country of origin food labelling laws will apply and come under Australian Consumer Law. For more information on this system, go to <https://www.foodlabels.industry.gov.au/>

8. Nutrition Labelling

Generally, all packaged foods must include a nutrition information panel.

Provided no nutrition claim is made, there are some exemptions to this requirement - some of these include basic foods such as tea, coffee, herbs and spices, fruit, vegetables, meat and fish.

The nutrition information panel helps you to compare nutrients, serving sizes and sometimes the percentage daily intake.

For assistance with developing a nutrition information panel, you can use Food Standards Australia New Zealand’s Nutrition Panel Calculator, available at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/npc/pages/nutrition-panel-calculator-introduction.aspx>

9. Legibility and Size

All words, statements or expressions required on a food label must be in the English language. The information on the label must be legible, and easily read.

Warning statement must be in a type size of not less than 3mm or 1.5mm on small packages.

10. Example of a typical food label

