

## **General Labeling Requirements European Union (EU)**

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## Labeling for foodstuffs

All foodstuffs marketed or sold in the European Union (EU) must comply with EU labeling rules, which aim at ensuring that consumers get all the essential information to make an informed choice while purchasing their foodstuffs. Hence, the applicable labeling provisions are as follows:

- General rules on food labeling
- Specific provisions for certain groups of products:
  - Labeling of Genetically Modified (GM) food and Novel Food
  - Labeling of foodstuffs for particular nutritional purposes
  - Labeling of food additives and flavourings
  - Labeling of materials intended to come into contact with food
  - Labeling of particular foodstuffs

Besides these mandatory rules, there is additional information that may be included by the manufacturers on a voluntary basis provided that it is accurate and does not mislead the consumer. For example, nutritional labeling is not obligatory unless a nutritional claim (e.g. "low fat", "high fiber") is made on the label or in advertising material. In this case, nutritional claims must comply with a standardized format, pursuant to Council Directive 90/496/EEC (OJ L-276 06/10/1990) (CELEX 31990Lo496). Similarly, Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 ([OJ L-189 20/07/2007](#)) (CELEX 32007Ro834) and Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 ([OJ L-250 18/09/2008](#)) (CELEX 32008Ro889) set out rules governing the use of the organic label.

## General rules on food labeling

Labels of foodstuffs according to the general rules laid down by Council Directive 2000/13/EC (see EU standards no.31) must contain the following particulars:

- The name under which the product is sold. No trademark, brand name or fancy name may substitute the generic name but rather may be used in addition. Particulars as to the physical condition of the foodstuff or the specific treatment it has undergone (powdered, freeze-dried, deep-frozen, concentrated, smoked, irradiated or treated with ionizing radiation) must be included where omission of such may confuse the purchaser.
- The list of ingredients, preceded by the word "Ingredients," must show all ingredients (including additives) in descending order of weight as recorded at the time of their use in the manufacture and designated by their specific name. In the case that those products that may contain ingredients liable to cause allergies or intolerances, such as alcoholic beverages, a clear indication should be given on the label by the word "contains" followed by the name of the ingredient. However, this indication will not be necessary provided the specific name is included in the list of ingredients.
- The net quantity of pre-packaged foodstuffs in metric units (liter, centiliter, milliliter) for liquids and (kilogram, gram) for non-liquids.
- The date of minimum durability consisting of day, month and year in that order and preceded by the words "best before" or "best before end" or the "use by" date for highly perishable goods.

- Any special conditions for keeping or use.
- The name or business name and address of the manufacturer, packager or importer established in the EU.
- Place of origin or provenance
- Instructions of use, where appropriate.
- Indication of the acquired alcoholic strength for beverages containing more than 1.2% by volume.
- Lot marking on pre-packaged foodstuffs with the marking preceded by the letter "L."

These particulars must appear on the packaging or on a label attached to pre-packaged foodstuffs. In the case of pre-packaged foodstuffs intended for mass caterers (foodstuffs sold in bulk), the compulsory labeling particulars must appear on commercial documents while the name under which it is sold, the date of durability or use-by-date and the name of manufacturer must appear on the external packaging.

The labeling must not mislead the purchaser as to the foodstuff's characteristics or effects nor attribute the foodstuff special properties for the prevention, treatment or cure of a human disease. The information provided by labels must be easy to understand, easily visible, clearly legible and indelible and must appear in the official language(s) of the Member State where the product is marketed. However, the use of foreign terms or expressions easily understood by the purchaser may be allowed.

You can also reach the full regulation plus all the related amendments at the following address:

[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/consumers/product\\_labeling\\_and\\_packaging/l21090\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/consumers/product_labeling_and_packaging/l21090_en.htm)

## **List of applicable legislation**

### **Specific provisions for certain groups of products**

There are also labeling provisions which apply to specific groups of food products in order to give the consumers more detailed information on the contents and the composition of these products:

### **Labeling of Genetically Modified (GM) food and Novel food**

Products consisting of or containing Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and food products obtained from GMOs which have been authorized for the placing on the EU market are subject to labeling requirements pursuant to Regulations (EC) No 1829/2003 and 1830/2003 (see EU STD no. 59& 60) of the European Parliament and of the Council ([OJ L-268 18/10/2003](#)) (CELEX 32003R1829) (CELEX 32003R1830).

In the case of pre-packaged products, operators are required to state on a label that "This product contains genetically modified organisms." This labeling obligation also applies to highly refined products (e.g. oil obtained from genetically modified maize) as well as GM additives and flavorings.

### **Labeling of foodstuffs for particular nutritional purposes**

In addition to the rules applicable to foodstuffs in general, specific provisions (e.g. declaration of the energy value, carbohydrate, protein and fat content, etc.) for groups of foods for particular nutritional uses (baby foods, dietary foods for special medical purposes, foods for weight reduction, foods for sportspeople, etc.) are laid down in specific Directives. These products must be suitable for their claimed nutritional purposes and marketed in such a way as to indicate their suitability.

### **Labeling of food additives and flavorings**

Additives and flavorings must always be labeled on the packaging of food products by their category (anti-oxidant, preservative, color, etc.) with their name or E-number. Other provisions on labeling of additives sold as such to food producers and consumers are laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 (See EU std no.35) ([OJ L-354 31/12/2008](#)) (CELEX 32008R1333) and Directive 88/388/EEC (OJ L-184 15/07/1988) (CELEX 31988L0388).

### **Labeling of materials intended to come into contact with food**

According to Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 (See EU std no.34) of the European Parliament and of the Council ([OJ L-338 13/11/2004](#)) (CELEX 32004R1935), articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs, including packaging materials and containers shall be labeled "for food contact" or shall bear the symbol with a glass and fork.

### **Labeling of particular foodstuffs**

Provisions in relation with the labeling of certain products are established in specific EU legislation. User-friendly fact sheets which summarize EU legislation are available in the **Summaries of EU legislation** website ([http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/index_en.htm)) or (see EU std 61) or press individual items below.

- [Cocoa and chocolate products](#)
- [Sugars](#)
- [Fruit juices and certain similar products](#)
- [Fruit jams, jellies and marmalades and sweetened chestnut purée](#)
- [Partly or wholly dehydrated preserved milk](#)
- [Caseins and caseinates](#)
- [Natural mineral waters](#)
- [Caffeine and quinine](#)
- [Coffee and chicory extracts](#)
- [Spreadable fats](#)
- [Beef and beef products](#)
- [Alcoholic beverages](#)
- [Spirit drinks](#)
- [Aromatized wines, aromatized wine-based drinks and aromatized wine-product cocktails](#)
- [Novel foods and novel foods ingredients](#)

- Food supplements
- Vitamins and minerals
- Food enzymes
- Foods and food ingredients treated with ionizing radiation
- Quick frozen foodstuffs

### **Packaging and Container Regulations**

The maximum tolerable error between the actual content and the quantity indicated on the label, and methods to check this are fixed in Council Directive 76/211/EEC, (see EU Standards no.32) as amended. A small "e" of at least 3 mm on the label guarantees that the actual content corresponds to the quantity indicated. The size of the figures indicating the quantity depends on the nominal quantity:

Nominal quantity greater than 1000 g or 100 cl: at least 6 mm high greater than 200 g/20 cl but less than 1000 g/100 cl: at least 4 mm greater than 50 g/5 cl but less than 200 g/20 cl: at least 3 mm less than 50 g/2 cl: 2 mm. The quantity must be followed by the unit of measurement.

Directive 2007/45/ec (see EU Standards no.33) abolish regulations on mandatory pack sizes at both EU and national levels. The Directive frees sizes for all prepackaged products except wine and spirits, coffee and white sugar. Member States in which mandatory nominal quantities are prescribed for milk, butter, dried pasta and coffee may maintain their restrictive rules until October 2012. The rules for white sugar may be maintained until October 2013. Mandatory nominal quantities for wines and spirits are set out in the Annex to Directive 2007/45/EC.

### **Packaging Waste Management**

Member States are required to take measures to reduce packaging waste and must introduce systems for reuse, recovery and recycling of packaging materials: Directive 94/62/ec

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1994L0062:20090420:EN:PDF>

To facilitate collection, reuse and recovery including recycling, an identification system for packaging has been drawn up (Commission Decision 97/129/EC). Its use is voluntary. A well-known and widely used recycling program is the German "green dot" system. More information can be found on the Packaging Recovery Organization Europe website which provides easy access to all Green Dot systems in Europe ([www.pro-e.org](http://www.pro-e.org)).

### **Materials in Contact with Foodstuffs**

REGULATION (EC) No 1935/2004 (See Eu std no.35)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2004R1935:20090807:EN:PDF>

specifies the main requirements for materials that come into contact with foodstuffs. It also sets out labeling and traceability requirements and the procedure for the authorization of substances through the European Food Safety Authority. Additional requirements will be proposed in specific measures and will include positive lists of authorized substances and materials. Annex I to regulation 1935/2004 lists

the group of materials for which specific measures may be adopted. To date, specific directives have been developed for plastic materials (Commission Regulation 10/2011), recycled plastic materials (Commission Regulation 282/2008), regenerated cellulose film (Commission Directive 2007/42/EC) and ceramics (Council Directive 84/500/EC). In the case of ceramics, migration limits have been established for lead and cadmium. Materials must bear an indication "for food contact" or the "symbol" reproduced at the end of the document.

#### Other information sources

Further information on food labeling may be found under Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labelingnutrition/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labelingnutrition/index_en.htm)

#### Nutritional Labeling and Nutrient and health claims

In general nutrition labeling is governed by Council Directive [90/496/EEC](#), as amended by Commission Directives [2003/120/EC](#)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:333:0051:0051:EN:PDF> and [2008/100/EC](#). (EU STD NO.63)

This Regulation foresees implementing measures to ensure that any claim made on foods' labeling, presentation or marketing in the European Union is clear, accurate and based on evidence accepted by the whole scientific community. Consequently foods bearing claims that could mislead consumers will be eliminated from the market. In addition, in order to bear claims, foods will have to have appropriate **nutrient profiles** which will be set. This will enhance the consumers' ability to make informed and meaningful choices. The regulation governing health claims in food is EC/1924/2006 (See Eu std no.64)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2006R1924:20080304:EN:PDF>

and the guidance on the regulation is 90/496/EC

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labelingnutrition/claims/guidance\\_claim\\_14-12-07.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labelingnutrition/claims/guidance_claim_14-12-07.pdf)

#### Food contact symbol

The size of this symbol is 5x5 cm, it has 300 dpi.



FCM symbol - JPG  
File

