

# **LABELLING, WEIGHTS AND INGREDIENTS**

This is an area that is largely enforced by Trading Standards Officers, except for use-by dates where Environmental Health staff have powers as well. It can be a very complex subject and if in any doubt about anything described below, please contact Trading Standards for further for advice.

## **Weights and Measures**

As a general rule, most loose foods such as fruit and vegetables must be sold by net weight, using approved metric weighing equipment. If food is pre-packed, the metric weight must be marked on the pack but you can also give an additional imperial weight declaration provided it is less prominent than the metric one.

You should be aware that you are not permitted to use household scales to determine net weight. You must use scales which have been 'stamped' as fit for use for trade and which are suitable for your purposes. If you are not sure the scales you are using are suitable, Trading Standards will be able to advise you.

If you pre-pack large quantities of food, the control systems you might need to use to ensure you pack the right quantities can be complex, so please contact Trading Standards for further advice.

## **Declaration of net weight**

When packed this is required to be stated on the packaging in 'grams' or 'kilograms' or with the permitted abbreviations 'g' or 'kg'. It must also be in the same field of vision as the food name.

Like all labelling the quantity marking must be clearly legible, indelible and easily visible to an intending purchaser under normal conditions of purchase. There are minimum height requirements for food labelling information- a minimum lower case letter height of 0.9mm, unless the packaging has a surface area greater than 80 square cm, in which case the minimum lower case letter height is 1.2mm.

## **Labelling**

Food labelling can be very specific but, generally, the following requirements apply for products sold loose, or which you have packed and are selling direct yourself under your own name (known as 'pre-packed for direct sale').

Such sales are largely exempt from the full food labelling requirements but will require:

### **Name of the food**

The name of the food must be sufficiently precise to inform the purchaser of the true nature of the food and to enable it to be distinguished from products with which it

could be confused and, if necessary, include a description of its use. The name of the food must also be accompanied by an indication of its physical treatment, such as 'pasteurised' or 'previously frozen'.

Some products such as melons and potatoes must be labelled with their variety.

### **Quantitative Ingredients Declaration**

If you sell any meat products, you will be required to indicate the percentage of meat ingredients in the product. This should be calculated based on the weight of the finished product. For uncooked products such as sausages, this will be as per the recipe. For cooked products such as hams, any cooking losses will be taken into account. It is no longer correct to declare a 'minimum meat content'. This may be an opportunity to emphasise any superior meat content of your product over those available in the high street.

### **Indication of additives**

If your ingredients contain any of the following additives, these need to be declared (you can do this by stating, for example, 'contains Colours and Preservatives'):

- Antioxidants
- Colours
- Flavour Enhancers
- Flavourings
- Sweeteners
- Preservatives
- Flour Treatment Agents

### **Claims**

There are other strict requirements in relation to claims you can make about a product or any of its ingredients. If you wish to make particular claims about your product and use terms such as, for example, organic, fresh, natural, authentic, traditional or pure, you should contact Trading Standards for advice on their use.

### **Allergenic Ingredients**

You are required to provide information about allergens and can either:

- list allergenic ingredients on your labels or
- signpost the consumers to another source for the information- perhaps a notice board, or to ask a member of staff.

You absolutely must be aware of all the allergens in your foods and ensure you and your staff are sufficiently knowledgeable about your products to answer customer queries clearly and accurately. You can contact Trading Standards for a list of allergenic ingredients.

## **Full Labelling requirements**

If you pre-pack products for sale by other retailers or sell such products made by others, the food label will need to comply with the full labelling requirements. These requirements are extensive and we would strongly recommend you contact Trading Standards for further advice.

### **Traceability**

You are required to demonstrate who has supplied a product to you, including its ingredients. If you supply to other food businesses, you must be able to show what product you have supplied and the customer details.

### **Prices**

Prices must be clearly displayed, either per item, or per kilogram/litre, as appropriate. Certain products must be sold by net weight and, for these products, you must display the price per kilogram. Examples include meat, fish and soft fruits sold in punnets.

The price can be displayed as a list at the stall or shown directly on the product.

### **Business Names**

It is a legal requirement to clearly display to customers the full business name and postal address or registered office of the owners of the stall.