

# PRE-PACKAGED FOOD LABELS

## Pre-packaged food labels

Food labels are a legal requirement and they provide important information to consumers in relation to the food they purchase, the nutrient value, and how the food should be stored and used safely. Food labels must be accurate, clear and easy to understand for the consumer. The following is a list of the mandatory requirements for pre-packaged food labels:

- name of the food\*;
- list of ingredients;
- ingredients or processing aids causing allergies or intolerances (there are 14 allergens that required a declaration);
- quantity of certain ingredients or categories of ingredients;

## Pre-packaged food

Pre-packaged food is defined as any single item for presentation to the final consumer and to mass caterers, consisting of a food and the packaging into which it was put before being offered for sale, whether such packaging encloses the food completely or only partially, but in any event in such a way that the contents cannot be altered without opening or changing the packaging.

- net quantity of the food\*;
- date of minimum durability or the use-by date;
- special storage conditions and/or conditions of use;
- name or business name and address of the food business operator;
- country of origin or place of provenance (where its absence would be misleading or where it is required under legislation);
- instructions for use where it would be difficult to make appropriate use of the food in the absence of such instructions;
- the alcohol strength by volume for beverages containing more than 1.2% of alcohol, by volume\*; and,
- nutritional declaration.

*\* Must appear in the same field of vision on the pack.*

## Legislation

The European Food Information to Consumers Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, also known as FIC legislation, details the EU rules on general food labelling. The food business operator under whose name the food is marketed is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information contained on a food label. It is important to familiarise yourself with this piece of legislation when developing your food label content.

## How to present labelling information



*Information must be clearly legible.*

- Mandatory information must appear directly on the food packaging or on a label attached to the food;
- it must be indicated with words and numbers but can also be shown using pictograms and symbols;
- information must be easily visible, clearly legible and indelible, if required;
- it must not be in any way hidden or obscured by any other written or pictorial matter;
- minimum font size is 1.2mm for the letter 'x' (or 0.9mm for food packaging with surface areas less than 80cm<sup>2</sup>); and,
- in Ireland, food information must be provided in English. Other languages may be provided in addition.

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Nutritional information is mandatory on food labels.

### Nutrition labelling

Having a nutrition declaration on pre-packaged foods is mandatory and **Table 1** presents the information you must have on your label, as well as the additional voluntary information that you can provide.

Nutrition information must be presented in tabular format (where space permits), with nutrients in a particular order. The nutrition declaration must be expressed per 100g/ml, and if desired a voluntary per portion declaration can be included too.

**Table 1: Nutritional requirements for labels and possible voluntary information.**

Mandatory nutritional information	Voluntary nutritional information
Energy (kJ/kcal per 100g/ml)	Monounsaturates (g per 100g/ml)
Fat (g per 100g/ml)	Polyunsaturates (g per 100g/ml)
Saturates (g per 100g/ml)	Polyols (g per 100g/ml)
Carbohydrates (g per 100g/ml)	Starch (g per 100g/ml)
Sugars (g per 100g/ml)	Fibre (g per 100g/ml)
Protein (g per 100g/ml)	Vitamins and minerals*
Salt (g per 100g/ml)	

\* Vitamins and minerals can only be included if they are listed in FIC legislation and present in significant amounts. They must be declared in the units specified in the legislation and expressed as a percentage of the reference intake (%RI) per 100g.

### Why is correct labelling important?

Inaccurate labelling and information may cause:

- damage to your brand and reputation;
- loss of consumer trust in your product;
- product recall;
- civil claims from injured consumers (due to allergies/intolerances); and,
- criminal prosecution.

All of these will cost your business money, in addition to the cost of correcting and reproducing the labelling/packaging.



There are 14 allergens that must be declared.

#### Allergens that must be declared

1. Cereals containing gluten
2. Crustaceans
3. Eggs
4. Fish
5. Peanuts
6. Soybeans
7. Milk
8. Nuts
9. Celery
10. Mustard
11. Sesame seeds
12. Sulphur dioxide and sulphites (>10mg/kg or mg/l)
13. Lupin
14. Molluscs

#### Further information

For further information please contact  
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The following resource is also helpful:

[https://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food\\_legislation/food\\_information\\_fic/food\\_information-fic.html](https://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food_legislation/food_information_fic/food_information-fic.html)

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[www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev](http://www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev)

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