



Consumer Guide to Country of Origin Information on Food Labels

Do you know where your food comes from?



SCOTLAND
OF FOOD & DRINK



This guide is intended to focus on country of origin information on food labels. As such it is not intended to be a full guide to broader food labelling requirements.

Foreword

Scotland is a land rich in primary produce with a vibrant food and drink sector. Enhancing our reputation as a 'Land of food and drink' is one of the goals of Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy. The Food Standards Agency in Scotland is supporting the development of this Policy in several ways and when Scottish Ministers asked the Food Standards Agency to produce guidance on origin labelling for consumers, we rose to the challenge. Putting consumers first and ensuring they have the information they need to make informed choices is a priority of the Food Standards Agency's Strategic Plan 2010 to 2015.

I am delighted to say that through a collaborative approach involving food producers and processors, retailers and consumers we have produced and delivered a new guide specifically for consumers in Scotland.

The guide provides an easy to read background on the rules on country of origin labelling and highlights those foods where specific origin labelling rules apply. Through examples based on actual food labels, the guide also helps explain the meaning of some of the terms and logos found on food labels on products sold in Scotland.

I am very grateful for the contributions from stakeholders and consumers in shaping this guide and look forward to promoting the guide in partnership with others.

Professor Charles Milne, Director Scotland

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Interested in where your food comes from?

If you are interested about the information provided on labels or want to understand more about where the food you buy comes from, read on...

This guide provides consumers in Scotland with some general background about how to tell from food labels where food comes from and is intended to inform consumer choice.

Are there any labelling rules about where food comes from?

YES - FOR SOME FOODS and these rules are set out on pages 4 and 5.

NO - FOR A WIDE RANGE OF OTHER FOODS e.g. pork, beefburgers, steak pie, sausages, bacon, frozen fish in batter, cheese, ready meals, processed vegetables, biscuits etc. BUT some manufacturers of these foods CHOOSE to give origin information to help consumers make informed choices.



The labelling rules are set at a European Union level and can be separated out into three main areas:

General Rules: For certain foods (mostly processed foods), the country of origin should always be given if the absence of this information could mislead consumers as to the true origin of the food. For example, the French Flag or a French image (Eiffel Tower) could create an expectation that the food is from France.

See the label illustration below: To avoid misleading the consumer, the origin 'UK' is given on this product - a 'French Style Bakery Baton' - because the bread is not made in France.

The diagram shows a label for 'Bakery Baton' bread. The label is divided into several sections: a top section with a French flag, a middle section with the product name 'Bakery Baton' in cursive, and a bottom section with a barcode and the text 'PRODUCED IN THE UK FOR: SMITH STORES'. Two callout boxes with red borders and dashed arrows point to specific parts of the label. The first callout points to the French flag and contains the text: 'Flag could create the impression that the bread is from France.' The second callout points to the 'PRODUCED IN THE UK FOR: SMITH STORES' text and contains the text: 'Origin declaration avoids misleading the consumer'. The label also includes the following text: 'BEST EATEN ON DAY OF PURCHASE', 'ALLERGY ADVICE: CONTAINS SOYA, WHEAT AND GLUTEN', and 'MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF NUTS'. The barcode number is 025242 004665.

Food Specific Rules: Consumers will find country of origin information on the following foods: beef and veal, fish, most fruit and vegetables, honey, olive oil, eggs, and poultry meat imported from countries which are not members of the European Union (EU). Further details are given in the "Glossary" page 20.

Rules for Regional Products (Traditional and Speciality foods):

These apply to products registered under the **EU Protected Food Name Scheme** giving them legal protection against imitation throughout the EU. The categories in the Scheme which link products to a particular place are -

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) - covers agricultural products and foodstuffs which are produced, processed and prepared in a given geographical area using recognised know-how. The red logo (shown below) was introduced in May 2010 replacing the previous blue logo. **Orkney Beef, Orkney Lamb** and **Shetland Lamb** have this status.



Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - covers agricultural products and foodstuffs closely linked to the geographical area. At least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the area. **Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb, Arbroath Smokie** and **Scottish Farmed Salmon** have this status.



Links to further details of the Schemes are given in the “Glossary” page 20.

Describing where food comes from

The words “country of origin”, “origin”, “place of origin” or “place of provenance” are often used when describing where food products come from. For the purpose of this guide we will use the words “country of origin” throughout.



What does country of origin mean?

Country of origin is not defined in the law covering food labelling. However, when dealing with food from one country which is processed in another, the approach taken for food labelling is based on ‘the place of last substantial change’. Broadly, this means that the last country in which a food is substantially changed is the country of origin.

What does ‘last substantial change’ mean?

Pork meat cured into bacon or ham, or meat made into sausages or pies would be considered to be a substantial change. The simple slicing, cutting, mincing and/or packing of meat would not be called a substantial change. Under this rule, if bacon is cured in Scotland from Danish Pork it can be called Scottish bacon. However, in line with the Food Standards Agency’s best practice advice, more and more producers now go beyond the legal minimum and also give the origin of imported foods.





Can Scotland be shown as the country of origin?

Yes - for most foods.

However, there are certain types of food to which specific EU labelling rules apply. These specific pieces of legislation require that the name of the EU Member State, or the catch area for sea fish, must be used. Therefore, whilst Scotland is, of course, a country, it forms part of the United Kingdom and it is the UK that is the Member State of the EU. Accordingly, in respect of the types of food to which such legislation applies, the country of origin is required to be stated as the "United Kingdom" or "UK". These foods include beef and veal, freshwater and farmed fish and most fruit and vegetables. However, in these circumstances it is still legally permissible to also label such foods as products of "Scotland" providing this information is given in addition to the mandatory "UK" information.

Where might I find country of origin information?

Depending on the food, not all labels or packaging have to carry origin information. Sometimes this is given on the front of a pack, but you may need to look on the back of a pack or wrapper to see all the origin information available. See label example on page 18.



What markings on a label are **NOT** intended to show country of origin, but may be mistakenly read in this way?

- Approved premises codes



The oval mark, which is used on certain products i.e. meat, fish and dairy, means that the food has been produced in premises which are approved in line with European Food Hygiene Regulations. The "UK" and code numbers help with the traceability of products along the food production chain.

- Breed of cattle - "Aberdeen Angus" is a breed of cattle and can be reared in many countries, not just Scotland.
- The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or seller (this is a requirement of the Food Labelling Rules).
- The names of fish e.g. Dover sole, Alaska pollock and Norway lobster (these are legal commercial designations).
- Product names e.g. Dundee Cake are not statements of origin by themselves.



Different Food - Different Rules

Information about the label examples is colour coded:

- Red = rules (origin information has to be shown)
- Blue = best practice (more than the what the law expects)
- Green = more information about where the food comes from
- Grey = does not show origin

MEAT SECTION

Fresh Chilled and Frozen Beef and Veal

What should I look for on a beef or veal label?

Country of origin information for fresh and frozen beef is required by law.



ORIGIN UK means that the meat has come from an animal born, reared and slaughtered in the UK

Breed of cattle – does not show origin of the meat

Name and address do not show origin of the meat

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the meat

EU Protected Food Name. Beef from an animal born, reared all of its life and slaughtered in Scotland and guaranteed to be produced by farmers and processors meeting strict quality assurance standards. The words Scotch Beef may appear without the rosette

If you see “Scottish”, this means beef from cattle born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland

Guarantees the food is from ‘assured’ farms and food companies that meet high standards of food safety and hygiene, animal welfare and environmental protection. The Union Flag means that the food is farmed, processed and packed in the UK.

“Protected Geographical Indication” symbol

Minced Beef

What should I look for on a minced beef label?

Country of origin information for fresh and frozen minced beef is required by law.



If you see “Scottish”, this means beef from cattle born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland

Broadly same rules apply as for beef, but label must also show Country e.g. UK in which the minced beef was prepared.

Guarantees the food is from ‘assured’ farms and food companies that meet high standards of food safety and hygiene, animal welfare and environmental protection. The Union Flag means that the food is farmed, processed and packed in the UK.

Name and address do not show origin of the mince

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the meat

EU Protected Food Name. Beef from an animal born, reared all of its life and slaughtered in Scotland and guaranteed to be produced by farmers and processors meeting strict quality assurance standards. The words Scotch Beef may appear without the rosette.

“Protected Geographical Indication” symbol

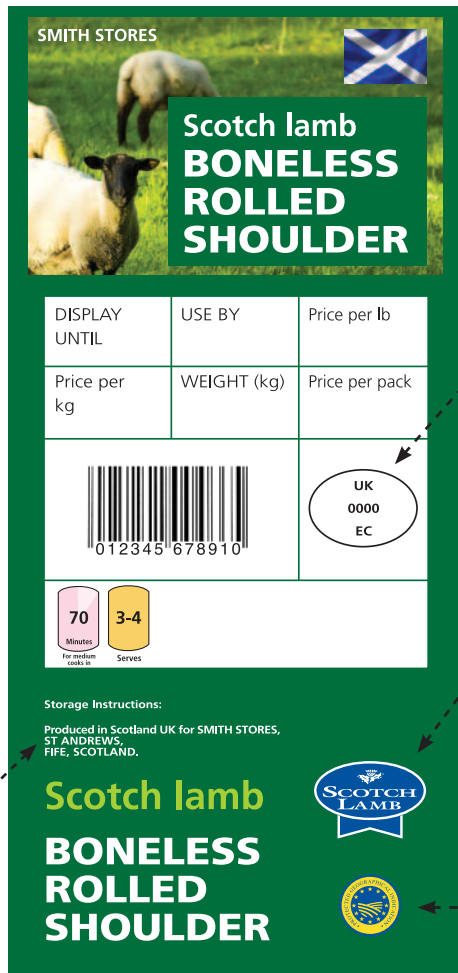
Fresh Chilled and Frozen Lamb

What should I look for on a lamb label?

Country of origin information for lamb is not required by law under the food labelling rules. However, a number of products are registered under the Protected Food Name Scheme.

Where information is given, it must not mislead the consumer.

This label example is “Scotch Lamb” which is a Protected Food Name and therefore origin information is provided:



Approved premises code – does not show origin of the meat

EU Protected Food Name. Lamb from an animal born, reared all its life and slaughtered in Scotland and guaranteed to be produced by farmers and processors meeting strict quality assurance standards

“Protected Geographical Indication” symbol

Name and address do not show origin of the meat

Pork

What should I look for on a pork label?

Country of origin information for pork is not required by law.

Where information is given, it must not mislead the consumer.



Producers/Retailers may choose to give origin information.

Name and address do not show origin of the meat

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the meat

Pork from pigs born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland under the Quality Meat Scotland Assurance Scheme

Fresh and Frozen Poultry

What should I look for on a poultry label?

Chicken, turkey and other poultry which has been imported from a non EU country (e.g. Thailand) **has** to show the country of origin. This does not apply to cooked poultry or processed poultry dishes such as ‘chicken kiev’.

On uncooked poultry from within the EU, where origin information is given, it must not mislead the consumer.



Producers/Retailers may choose to give origin information.

Name and address do not show origin of the meat

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the meat

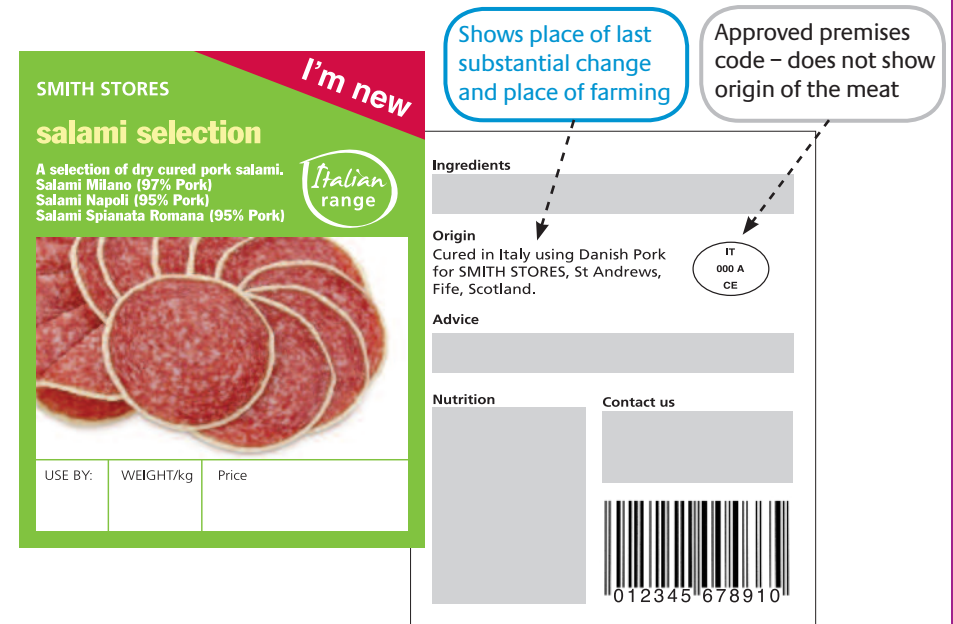
Meat Products Section e.g. bacon, meat pies and cooked meats

What should I look for on a meat product label?

Country of origin information for meat products is not required by law.

Where information is given, it must not mislead the consumer.

Several ingredients may be used to make products such as pies and bacon. You may see origin information on the label about the meat ingredients e.g. Salami “cured in Italy using Danish Pork”.



This example gives country of origin information on both last substantial change and place of farming. Other similar products may only give last substantial change.

Some products may show an EU Protected Food Name e.g. Melton Mowbray Pork Pies has been granted a PGI, meaning that pies must have been processed in the town of Melton Mowbray and its surrounding region and to the registered standard.

Fish and Shellfish Section



What should I look for on a label?

Specific origin labelling rules apply to fish sold at retail in certain presentations - live, fresh, chilled or frozen fish, fresh, chilled or frozen fish fillets and other fish meat; smoked, dried, salted or brined fish; crustaceans (except those that are both cooked and peeled) and molluscs (except those that are cooked). Processed fish products are not covered by the specific rules.

These rules mean that wild caught and farmed fish and shellfish products must be marked or labelled at the point of sale to the final consumer with the following origin information to show where it has been caught or harvested.

Sea Fish:

The label must show one of 12 internationally agreed catch areas. For example, the catch area “North-East Atlantic” would need to be shown on the label for any fish/shellfish caught in the UK. The North-East Atlantic catch area includes the North Sea and the Irish Sea.

SMITH STORES Responsibly Sourced

COD LOINS *Serving suggestion*

CAUGHT IN: North-East Atlantic	CATCH METHOD:
DISPLAY UNTIL:	USE BY:
WEIGHT/kg	Price
£/kg	

Packed in UK for SMITH STORES, ST ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

Cod (Gadus morhua) loins, skinless and boneless.

Cooking guidelines:

Freezing guidelines

Storage and additional information:

Recipe suggestion:

Caught in the North East Atlantic. Packed in the UK for SMITH STORES, ST ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

UK ABC 000 EC

012345 678910

Name and address do not show origin of the fish

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the fish

Freshwater Fish: The label must show the EU Member State or non EU country. For example, trout caught in freshwaters of Norway, would need to mention Norway.

Farmed and cultivated products:

The label must show the EU Member State or non EU country in which the product reached full size or reached a stage ready for ‘harvesting’ for sale to the final consumer. For example, where a fish started its life farmed in one country e.g. France and was finally farmed in another e.g. Iceland, the country of origin would be Iceland. However, FSA best practice advice recommends that the fish should be described as Farmed Icelandic fish reared in France.

Some products may show an EU Protected Food Name e.g. “Scottish Farmed Salmon” and “Arbroath Smokie” have been granted PGI status.

When fish is smoked it undergoes a substantial change, which affects how it is labelled for country of origin. “Scottish Smoked Salmon” and “Smoked Scottish Salmon” are not the same thing. The former could be salmon smoked in Scotland but made from, for example, Norwegian Salmon. The process of smoking means it can be described as Scottish. Best practice is to show the origin of the salmon as well as the place of smoking e.g. “Norwegian Salmon smoked in Scotland”.

SMITH STORES Responsibly Farmed

Salmon Fillets

FARMED IN: Scotland, UK	
DISPLAY UNTIL:	USE BY:
WEIGHT/kg	Price

Packed in UK for SMITH STORES, ST ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

Farmed Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar) fillets, skin on and boneless.

Cooking guidelines:

Freezing guidelines

Storage and additional information:

Nutritional information:

Farmed in Scotland (U.K.), Packed in the UK for SMITH STORES, ST ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

UK ABC 000 EC

012345 678910

Name and address do not show origin of the fish

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the fish

Place where fish reached full size or was ready for harvesting for sale to the consumer

Dairy Section e.g. milk, butter and yogurt

What should I look for on a dairy label?

Country of origin information for milk and other dairy products is not required under general food labelling rules.

Producers/Retailers may choose to give origin information.



Guarantees the food is from 'assured' farms and food companies that meet high standards of food safety and hygiene, animal welfare and environmental protection. The Union Flag means that the food is farmed, processed and packed in the UK.

Approved premises code – does not show origin of the milk

Some dairy products will have country of origin information because they have an EU Protected Food Name e.g. Staffordshire Cheese, Parmigiano Reggiano (Parmesan) Cheese and Cornish Clotted Cream have been granted PDO status.

Prepared Foods/Ready Meals Section

What should I look for on a label?

Country of origin information is only required if the absence of this information could mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the food.

As a minimum any origin information provided must be based on place of 'last substantial change.'

Sometimes, labelling or packaging carries a design or colours which suggest the food has been produced in a particular country.

For example, a pasta meal that is marketed as part of an "Italian" range should clearly show the actual country of origin if produced elsewhere. If the pasta in the meal is from Italy this could also be shown on the label.

Shows product was made in the UK with some Italian ingredients



For some products national terms are used as part of the name e.g. "British Steak Pie". These terms form an origin declaration. If the place that is declared as the origin of the product is not the same as the origin of the primary ingredients, in order not to be misleading, it may be necessary for producers to provide information on the origin of these ingredients.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Section

What should I look for on a label?

Certain fresh fruit and vegetables (those covered by EU marketing standards) must display country of origin information.

For some products there may be additional non-origin requirements.

The marketing standards apply to most fresh fruit, vegetables, salads, some herbs and some nuts in shell. The most notable exceptions to these rules are bananas, potatoes, dried and 'kitchen ready' produce i.e. produce having undergone trimming or cutting. See Glossary on page 20 for more information.

Mixed packages containing produce from more than one country and with a net weight of less than 5kg may replace each country of origin with one of the following:

- Mix of EU fruit and vegetables;
- Mix of non-EU fruit and vegetables; and
- Mix of EU and non-EU fruit and vegetables

SMITH STORES

Scottish

Scottish Carrots

BOIL IN 10 MINS

012345678910

DISPLAY UNTIL:	
COUNTY; ABERDEENSHIRE FARMER'S NAME; 20-40MM UNITED KINGDOM	
WASH BEFORE USE KEEP REFRIGERATED	
WEIGHT/kg	

Packed in UK for SMITH STORES,
ST ANDREWS, FIFE, SCOTLAND.

Producers/ Retailers may choose to give additional information on a region e.g. Aberdeenshire and descriptive details about a location.

Country in which the carrots were grown

Glossary

EU - The European Union is made up of 27 Member States
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

EU Protected Food Name Scheme

The designations under this Scheme which link products to a particular place are: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

Further details are available from the European Commission website
<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/>

Foods covered by specific rules

Beef and Veal - EU Beef Labelling Regulation

Eggs - EU Egg Marketing Standards

Poultry from non EU countries - EU Marketing Standards for Poultry

Fish - EU Fish Labelling Regulations*

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables - EU Marketing Standards

Honey - EU Directive on Honey*

Olive Oil - EU Olive Oil Regulation

Wine - EU Wine Regulation

*Further details on the rules for Fish Labelling and Honey Labelling are available from the Food Standards Agency in Scotland and on the Agency's website - <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/labelregsguidance/>

For more information on the other foods listed, please contact the Scottish Government or view their website - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry/Origin>

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Specific marketing standards covering the quality and labelling requirements apply to the following fruit and vegetables: Apples, Citrus, Kiwifruit, Lettuces, curled leaved & broad leaved Endives, Peaches & Nectarines, Pears, Strawberries, Sweet peppers, Table grapes and Tomatoes.

A general marketing standard applies to most other fresh fruit, vegetables, salads, some herbs and some nuts in shell. For enquiries in relation to the EU Marketing Standards for fresh fruit and vegetables, contact:
hort.marketing@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Imported foods & hygiene standards - To be allowed into the European Union, food must be produced to standards which are at least equivalent to those required under European Food Law, including hygiene rules or meet the terms of a special agreement between the European Union and the exporting country.

More detail is available at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports/beforeimporting/pointofentry>

“Scotch Beef” and **“Scotch Lamb”** - Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb are marks of higher quality guaranteed by the EU PGI scheme. It means that it comes from an animal born, reared all its life and slaughtered in Scotland and produced by farmers and processors meeting strict quality assurance standards.

“Scottish Beef” - This term may be used for beef produced from animals born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland. To display a “Scottish” label, prior approval is required from the Scottish Government under the voluntary beef labelling scheme. All claims under this scheme are independently verified to ensure that the information given on the label is not misleading to customers.

“Scotch Whisky” - UK law states that this can only be distilled at a distillery in Scotland from water and malted barley (to which only whole grains of other cereals may be added). It must be matured in Scotland for at least 3 years in oak casks and have a minimum alcoholic strength of 40% vol.

“Specially Selected Pork” - Specially Selected Pork is an independent mark of quality which appears on pork from pigs born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland under the Quality Meat Scotland Assurance Scheme.

The Red Tractor logo is an independent mark of quality that may appear on beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy and cereal products. It guarantees that the food comes from ‘assured’ farms and processors. The logo also includes a statement of origin in the flag and the Union flag indicates that the food has been farmed, processed and packed in the UK.



Want to know more?

The FSA's detailed guidance on Country of Origin is available at
www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/labelregsguidance/originlabelling

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Fresh Produce Consortium	Scotch Whisky Association
National Farmers' Union Scotland	
Quality Meat Scotland	
Red Tractor	



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