

# Mustard ingredients and peanut contamination - guidance for businesses

Food businesses are responsible for establishing whether any of their food products are affected and taking steps to ensure consumers are protected, and the food they sell is safe.

## Business guidance on mustard ingredients and peanut contamination

The Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) are aware that some mustard products being used as ingredients (including anything that contains mustard seeds, mustard powder and mustard flour), have become [contaminated with peanuts](#).

This could pose a significant food safety risk, as peanut is one of the allergens that can cause severe allergic reactions.

We issued [updated guidance on 27 September 2024](#) advising those with a peanut allergy to avoid consuming foods that contain or may contain mustard ingredients. This includes:

- wholegrain mustard
- mustard used as a condiment or garnish
- fresh/chilled products containing mustard as an ingredient, including mustard powder and mustard flour
- long shelf-life products containing mustard as an ingredient, including mustard powder and mustard flour
- mustard seeds

### What has happened?

Mustard products, (mustard powder, mustard seeds, mustard flour and ingredients containing mustard), are widely used in food production. On-going investigations have to date traced the contaminated mustard ingredients to three suppliers in India. These producers have supplied three spice companies in the UK, which have subsequently distributed the ingredients to a range of manufacturing, hospitality and retail businesses. We have asked all three spice companies to urgently check whether their products have been contaminated, and to immediately inform any businesses they have supplied.

We, in conjunction with FSS, are working urgently with the relevant Local Authorities, industry organisations, and where required, directly with individual businesses to identify which products may be affected and to determine the scale of this incident and understand the impact on consumers and the UK food supply chain.

These investigations have found that contaminated mustard ingredients have been used in numerous products in the UK. It is important to note there are instances where the contaminated ingredient has been used in products such as sauces, spices and flavoured mayonnaise, which are then used as an ingredient in other products.

Businesses affected by this issue have a statutory requirement to inform their Local Authority (LA). We ask that all businesses respond promptly to any notifications or instructions from suppliers

or LAs to withdraw/recall products from the market and, when asked, to provide any information requested in relation to the incident.

At this stage, the scale of the problem remains unknown. Batches of mustard ingredients are large, meaning that the results can vary within a single batch. For example, there have been instances where sampling and testing of one part of a batch has not detected peanut, while peanut has been found in samples taken from another part of the same batch.

## **What should my business do?**

Food businesses are responsible for establishing whether any of their food products are affected and taking steps to ensure consumers are protected, and the food they sell is safe.

Businesses should scrutinise their supply chains, completing [traceability exercises to identify products](#) (or ingredients used in products) containing mustard ingredients that have come from specific suppliers in India. The FSA has written to industry representatives with further details.

Where products from these suppliers are identified, product-specific risk assessments should be carried out to determine whether they could contain mustard ingredients that may have been contaminated with peanuts.

We are working with Local Authorities to map the supply chain for batches where there are peanut detections. If your business has been supplied with a product that contains part of a wider batch found to be contaminated, your LA may advise you to remove the product from sale or use as an ingredient, but retain it, so that its origin can be traced. You may also be asked to show any sampling and testing you have done is representative of the size of the batch, and/or to alter your product labelling to accurately describe the presence or potential presence of any allergens.

## **Do I need to relabel products?**

Product labelling should be checked to determine whether it reflects the potential presence of peanuts. For example, peanut may be an existing ingredient in the product and therefore already in the ingredients list on the label.

Businesses may choose to add voluntary [precautionary allergen labelling \(PAL\) statements](#) to their products if, following a product-specific risk assessment, they conclude that the risk to consumers with a peanut allergy cannot be adequately managed without such additional labelling.

If a food business identifies any product it has placed on the market, which may have been contaminated with peanut, and product labelling does not properly communicate the risk to consumers, the product should be withdrawn, and a recall should be undertaken. Food businesses must [inform their competent authority](#) (local authority, port health authority and the FSA in an FSA-approved establishment), which will advise of any further action.

Products still within the control of the food business or supply chain can be placed on the market if they are relabelled to ensure the risk of peanut contamination is sufficiently communicated to consumers. However, the detection of peanut should be communicated to the competent authority, (local authority, port health authority and the FSA in an FSA-approved establishment) to help our ongoing investigation.

## **Q+A on mustard ingredients and peanut contamination**

## **Do I need to update my allergen matrix to include peanuts in any products containing mustard?**

Food businesses may choose to add voluntary [precautionary allergen labelling \(PAL\) statements](#) to their products if, following a product-specific risk assessment, they conclude that the risk to consumers with a peanut allergy cannot be adequately managed without such additional information.

## **Should I be contacting my own suppliers to find out if their products are affected?**

Yes, businesses should complete traceability exercises to identify products (or ingredients used in products) containing mustard that has come from the manufacturers in India, where based on current understanding, these are linked to contaminated product distribution.

## **What is an acceptable threshold business can work to?**

We do not recommend an allergen threshold. Food businesses are responsible for conducting their own risk assessments to establish whether the food they sell is safe to consumers with a peanut allergy.

## **What is the FSA's advice on using ED01 or ED05 to assess levels of concern/risk?**

Food businesses are responsible for establishing whether any of their food products are contaminated and, if so, taking steps to ensure their food is safe for consumers with an allergy to peanut. Businesses must assess the level of contamination and ensure that their labelling sufficiently communicates the potential risk to consumers.

## **How long will I need to put in place these contingency plans?**

We are conducting extensive investigations, which may take some time, so we would advise that you continue to take a precautionary approach with mustard containing ingredients whilst this is ongoing. We will continue to liaise with impacted businesses directly, as well as via our website and external communications channels to inform business of any changes.

## **I work in a restaurant, what should I be doing to protect my customers?**

We continue to advise people who have a peanut allergy to avoid eating any foods that contain or may contain mustard, mustard seeds, mustard powder or mustard flour because of potential contamination with peanuts.

If any of the items on your menu contain (or may contain mustard, mustard powder or mustard flour) please make sure you inform customers with peanut allergies. We are advising people with peanut allergies to check with cafe or restaurant staff if any of their products contain mustard – by law, food businesses must provide this information to customers.

You may also find it useful to refresh your knowledge of [our general guidance on how to manage allergies in food businesses](#).