

Allergen Information for Non-Prepacked Foods Best Practice: Introduction

Introduction to the Best Practice Guidance

Introduction

1. Food businesses must inform consumers if they have used any of the [14 mandated allergens](#) as an ingredient in their food.
2. This information is particularly important for consumers who have a food hypersensitivity (food allergy, intolerance or coeliac disease) and can have adverse reactions when eating certain foods (allergens). These reactions can range in severity, however, at worst can cause anaphylaxis, which can be life threatening.
3. Businesses must ensure that all mandatory food allergen information is accurate, available to, and easily accessible by the consumer. This applies to all food supplied by food businesses, including when food is offered complimentary or otherwise without charge.
4. The FSA have carried out [extensive research and engagement with consumers and food businesses](#) to understand the most effective ways allergen information can be delivered to consumers and have reflected our findings in this guidance.
5. This best practice guidance covers how to provide allergen information for non-prepacked foods in the most effective way and manner preferred by consumers which, is in writing and supported by a conversation. Non-prepacked foods include all foods that are not prepacked such as meals in cafés and restaurants, loose meat and cheese at a deli counter or drinks made to order in a coffee shop. This guidance does not cover prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods, [which have their own rules](#).
6. The provision of voluntary information is also mentioned, for example precautionary allergen labelling (PAL) and 'free from' claims; this is covered in more detail in our [Food allergen labelling and information technical guidance](#).
7. This best practice guidance is strictly in relation to allergens, and does not cover other information requirements such as name of the food, the quantitative ingredients declaration (QUID) on products containing meat etc.
8. The legislative framework around the provision of food allergen information is largely contained in assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 (for England and Wales) and Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 (for Northern Ireland) and The Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR), the Food Information (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Food Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.
9. More information on the legal requirements for allergen information provision for all types of foods can be found in our [Food allergen labelling and information technical guidance](#) and a list of relevant legislation is provided in Annexe A.

Intended audience

10. This guidance is intended to support food businesses such as retailers and caterers in the non-prepacked food sector, such as coffee shops, cafés, restaurants, fast food outlets, delis, butchers, bakeries and market stalls, to provide allergen information to consumers in person and digitally/online.

11. The guidance is relevant to businesses of all sizes including small and micro enterprises.

Purpose of the guidance

12. The purpose of this guidance is to demonstrate how food businesses can provide accurate and up to date allergen information in a way that is most useful, meaningful and easily accessible to consumers.

13. By following best practice guidance, businesses can promote consumer confidence in their food businesses by ensuring customers can access and understand the allergen information they need to make safe and informed choices about the food they eat.

Legal status of guidance

14. Directly applicable EU legislation no longer applies in GB. EU legislation retained when the UK exited the EU became assimilated law on 1 January 2024, published on [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk).

15. References to any legislation in FSA guidance with 'EU' or 'EC' in the title (e.g. Regulation (EC) 178/2002) should now be regarded as assimilated law where applicable to GB and as directly applicable EU law where applicable to Northern Ireland. References to 'Retained EU Law' or 'REUL' should now be regarded as references to assimilated law.

16. For businesses moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, information on [the Windsor Framework, including the NI Retail Movement Scheme \(NIRMS\)](#), is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

17. These guidance notes have been produced to provide best practice guidance. You are not required by law to follow best practice guidance. While you are not required by law to follow best practice guidance, an approach consistent with this guidance should ensure you meet the relevant responsibilities and consumer expectations.

18. Businesses with specific queries may wish to seek advice from their local enforcement agency, which will usually be the trading standards department of their local authority but could be the environmental health team in some cases.

Review

19. We aim to keep all guidance up to date and undertake regular reviews to ensure guidance remains relevant. The next scheduled review date for this guidance is September 2026.

Contact us

20. We welcome your feedback on this guidance: hypersensitivitypolicy@food.gov.uk