

Food Standards Agency seeks views on ‘may contain’

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has launched a consultation to gather views from businesses and consumers on the use of precautionary allergen information and labels, often written as “may contain” on food packaging.

Recent FSA studies have found that food-hypersensitive consumers – people who live with food allergies, intolerances, or coeliac disease - appreciate precautionary allergen information or labelling when it clearly tells them about an unavoidable risk of allergen cross-contamination.

But consumers can also be confused by the range of precautionary labelling statements on prepacked foods, such as chocolate bars, biscuits and other products sold in supermarkets, where the wording can differ between products and it may not be clear precisely what the risk is.

The studies found that the majority of food businesses are using these labels to try to protect consumers but are confused about when and how they need to do so. There is evidence that businesses need clarity on the measures they need to take to control the risk of allergen cross-contamination, which then informs their labelling decision.

To help develop our work on this issue, the FSA wants to hear from businesses, local authority food teams, healthcare professionals, allergy charities, consumers and any other interested parties through a consultation and a series of online workshops.

The FSA is also seeking views on the provision of precautionary allergen information about non-prepacked foods, such as meals served in restaurants, where precautionary information can be given verbally – but sometimes is not provided at all.

Food Standards Agency Director of Policy, Rebecca Sudworth, said:

“Consumers have told us that inconsistency in how precautionary allergen labelling and information is given can cause a lack of trust in the labels and stop them being able to enjoy certain foods.

“We know that precautionary allergen information is difficult for businesses and local authorities responsible for enforcing the law, and we very keen to hear from them about how to make the law clearer and easier to follow.

“The responses we get will help inform our next steps in making a workable system for businesses to put into practice that consumers understand and trust.”

The consultation on precautionary allergen information opens on 6 December and runs until 14 March 2022, and the FSA will also be gathering the opinions of businesses, local authority food teams responsible for enforcing the law, industry bodies and consumers through a series of in-depth workshops.

You can get involved by sharing your views here: [Precautionary Allergen Labelling \(PAL\): The ‘may contain’ Consultation | Food Standards Agency](#)

