

Food supplements

Summary information on the labelling of food supplements

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Intended audience

This document has been created with the aim of providing a summary of labelling requirements for manufacturers, producers, retailers of food supplements.

Executive summary

The information set out in this document contains details of the labelling requirements, which apply to food supplements. It includes a number of weblinks to more detailed information on this and related issues.

Prepared by Food Supplements, Fortification and Claims Team

Last updated – September 2011 to update references to legislation in this area and reflect the transfer of responsibility for nutrition policy in England from the Food Standards Agency to the Department of Health on 1 October 2010. No other significant changes have been made.

The Department of Health has responsibility for national and EU legislation on food supplements within England. The responsibility for the policy area of food supplements legislation in Wales has moved to the Welsh Assembly. The Food Standards Agency Devolved Administrations of Scotland, and Northern Ireland are responsible for national legislation in their own administrations where separate but similar regulations apply.

Food Supplements legislation

Food supplements have their own labelling requirements, laid out in the Food Supplements (England) Regulations 2003 and equivalent regulations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/1387/contents/made>

These stipulate that:

No person shall sell a food supplement which is ready for delivery to the ultimate consumer or to a catering establishment unless the name under which it is sold is "food supplement". Without prejudice to the Food Labelling Regulations 1996, no person shall sell a food supplement which is ready for delivery to the ultimate consumer or to a catering establishment unless it is marked or labelled with the following particulars

- (a) the name of the category of any vitamin or mineral or other substance with a nutritional or physiological effect which characterises the product or an indication of the nature of that vitamin or mineral or other substance;*
- (b) the portion of the product recommended for daily consumption;*
- (c) a warning not to exceed the stated recommended daily dose;*
- (d) a statement to the effect that food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet;*
- (e) a statement to the effect that the product should be stored out of the reach of young children; and*
- (f) the amount of any vitamin or mineral or other substance with a nutritional or physiological effect which is present in the product.*

Nutrition Labelling

Food supplements are exempt from the requirements of the Nutrition Labelling Directive (90/496/EEC as amended). However, the Food Supplements (England) Regulations 2003 requires, in the case of vitamins and minerals, the information in point (f) above, to be accompanied by the percentage of the relevant Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) as set out in the Annex to Commission Directive 2008/100/EC:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008L0100:EN:NOT>

The list of RDAs are provided in the Annex to this guidance.

¹ The Food Supplements (Scotland) Regulations 2003 SSI 2003 No. 278; the Food Supplements (Wales) Regulations 2003 WSI 2003 No. 1719 (W186); and the Food Supplements (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2003 Statutory Rule 2003 No. 273

General labelling requirements

The provisions of the Food Labelling Regulations 1996 (as amended) govern food labelling in the UK (apart from Northern Ireland, which has similar parallel legislation). These regulations lay down detailed requirements for the labelling of most foods to carry:

- A name;
- A list of ingredients,
- The amount of certain ingredients used;
- A date mark;
- Any special storage conditions or conditions of use;
- The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or EC seller;
- Instructions for use;
- The place of origin of the food, if failure to give it might mislead.

These requirements apply to food products, which are ready for delivery to the "ultimate consumer" or to a catering establishment. The "ultimate consumer" is someone who buys otherwise than a) for resale, b) for the purposes of a catering establishment or c) for the purposes of a manufacturing business. You are advised that it is good practice for a wholesale importer to provide as much information as possible, even where there is no legal requirements to do so (as long as the information being provided is correct), as it will help the company manufacturing the final product to fulfil their labelling requirements.

The Food Labelling Regulations 1996 (SI 1996 No 1499), and subsequent amendments can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1996/1499/contents/made>

Guidance notes on these Regulations can be found at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100817075455/http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/>

Vegetarian labelling

There is no definition in law for the terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' either at UK or European level, although consumers are protected by general food law, which outlaws false or misleading labelling. Best practice guidance on the labelling of vegetarian and vegan foods can be found at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100817075455/http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/>

Organic food

In order to make an organic claim on a label, a food manufacturer must be registered with a recognised organic control body. For further information on organic labelling and a list of

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approved UK organic control bodies, please contact the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (details below).

Contacts

The Department of Health does not authorise or check the composition or labelling of individual products. **For advice on specific products, including the checking of labels**, please contact your local Trading Standards office, the details of which can be obtained on the Food Standards Agency's website by using the on-line search engine at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/>

For information **on food supplement legislation**, please contact the Department of Health helpline at:

Customer Service Centre
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
Tel: 020 7210 4850

or on-line enquiries: <http://www.info.doh.gov.uk/contactus.nsf/memo?openform>

For information on **general labelling, vegetarian labelling or organic food**, please contact the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), either by telephone on 08459 33 55 77 or by email at: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) for vitamins and minerals

The RDAs were amended by Commission Directive 2008/100/EC² and come into force on 31 October 2012.

Vitamins	RDA	Minerals	RDA
Vitamin A	800 µg	Calcium	800 mg
Vitamin D	5 µg	Magnesium	375 mg
Vitamin E	12 mg α-TE	Iron	14 mg
Vitamin K	75 µg	Copper	1 mg
Vitamin B1	1.1 mg	Iodine	150 µg
Vitamin B2	1.4 mg	Zinc	10 mg
Niacin	16 mg	Manganese	2 mg
Pantothenic acid	6 mg	Potassium	2000 mg
Vitamin B6	1.4 mg	Selenium	55 µg
Folic acid*	200 µg	Chromium	40 µg
Vitamin B12	2.5 µg	Molybdenum	50 µg
Biotin	50 µg	Fluoride	3.5 mg
Vitamin C	80 mg	Chloride	800 mg
		Phosphorus	700 mg

* Folic acid is the term included in Annex I of Commission Directive 2008/100/EC and covers all forms of folates.

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008L0100:EN:NOT>