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EU puts food information on the menu from this Saturday

A new mandatory food labelling system will land on supermarket shelves and restaurants across the EU from December 13th.

The [EU Food Information Regulation](#) is an important consumer success and a major step towards transparency of what is in our food by clearly displaying allergens, nutrients, the origin of meat and nano ingredients.

Certain rules will be rolled out progressively, but from Saturday allergens must be highlighted in the ingredients' list in bold, underlined or in different colours.

Furthermore, restaurants and canteens will have to display allergen information. These will make eating out safer and less problematic for allergic consumers.

Food manufacturers have exactly two years to align their product packaging with the other rules. These include compulsory nutrition declaration.

What will change?

| | From 13/12/2014 Allergens, nano, fonts and oils | From 04/2015 Meat origin | From 13/12/2016 Nutrition table |
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| What's new? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumers will know at a glance if their food (including loose food) contains any of 14 allergens e.g. peanuts, soy or milk, even when eating out. These must be highlighted in ingredient lists and displayed in restaurants, cafes, etc. - Nano components will be labelled in the list of ingredients. - Minimum 1,2mm font size. - Oils will have to specify what they are made of: olive, palm, sunflower, etc. | <p>The countries in which pigs, sheep, goats and poultry are reared and slaughtered for raw meat sale will be mandatorily displayed.</p> | <p>Processed foods and drinks must display nutritional information (energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein, salt) on back of pack, per 100g or ml and possibly also per chosen portion.</p> |

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| Before then? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Displaying allergens was mandatory only for pre-packed foods. Public eateries were not obliged to provide allergen info. - No nano labelling required - No font size restriction. - Not mandatory to specify the type of vegetable oil used. | Only fresh beef displayed full information on origin. | Nutrition info table not mandatory. |
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Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), commented:

"These new rules prove the EU is working towards clearer food information for consumers. It's the right reflex given how recent scandals shook up consumers' confidence. They have the right to know what they eat.

"Consumers are often in a hurry when food shopping, so shunting nutrition information to the back-of-packs requires them an extra effort. Such key information should be upfront.

"Food manufacturers will still be free to define portions. Foods for one person, such as a frozen pizza or yoghurt, are obvious portions, but the same cannot be said for foodstuffs like cereals and soup. Unrealistic portions can disguise unhealthy ingredient levels and regulators should provide guidance on portions.

"Giving information to consumers is worthwhile only if they can read it. So far, there was no font size requirement, leaving the door open to illegible fonts. Now, a minimum size has been set but will be only 1.2 mm, about the size of a poppy seed.

"The origin of fresh meat will be less mysterious with the new rules - the countries in which the animal is reared and slaughtered will be finally on display. But we see no valid reason why birthplace labelling was scrapped. Consumers want full origin information, not just scraps.

"We expect the nutrition rules to translate swiftly and manufacturers not drag out the two-year window until December 2016."

ENDS

See our [infographic](#) asking MEPs to include birthplace labelling, Feb 2014.