



Food Labelling and Packaging

Are you aware of the food labelling and packaging requirements for retail sale? This fact sheet can assist you understand some of the packaging options, legal requirements and where to find more information.

Food labelling and packaging laws

Food labelling and packaging requirements are detailed in the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code which is enacted in Tasmania through the *Tasmanian Food Act 2003*.

Tasmanian local councils, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services (DHHS), administer the food labelling provisions.

Food businesses considering food labelling and packaging issues should refer to the Food Standards Code, and seek independent legal advice. Copies of the Food Standards Code can be obtained from Food Standards Australia New Zealand at www.foodstandards.gov.au.

What food must be labelled?

All packaged food for retail sale (selling products directly to the public) must be labelled. However, there are some exceptions. These include:

- food which is unpackaged (e.g. sold loose such as fresh fruit and vegetables)
- food made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold
- food which is packaged in the presence of the purchaser
- food displayed in an assisted service cabinet which requires food to be served upon request of purchaser
- food packaged whole or cut fresh fruit and vegetables in packaging that displays the nature and quality of product (excluding sprouts from seeds)
- food delivered packaged ready for immediate consumption at the order of purchaser
- packaged food sold at a fundraising event

- food in an individual portion pack or inner pack and not designed for sale without the outer (labelled) package (e.g. cheese sticks in plastic within an outer package or cracker biscuits in cellophane contained within an cardboard outer package).

It is important to note that although some foods are not required to be labelled, there are still information requirements that must be complied with.

For more information on food which does not need to be labelled, see the following links:

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/food_safety/information_for_food_businesses_and_community_organisation/s/fact_sheet_-_providing_information_for_food_without_a_label

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/userguide/Documents/Guide%20to%20Standard%201.2.1%20-%20Labelling%20and%20Other%20Information%20Requirements.pdf>

<https://www.business.gov.au/info/run/goods-and-services/selling-goods-and-services/selling-goods/product-labelling>

What information must appear on the label?

The purpose of labels on packaged foods is to help consumers make informed choices about different foods, brands, and flavours. Much of the information is required to be provided by law. Labels must be in English, clearly visible on the outside of the package. Labels must not be misleading and should include the below information:

- Name or a description of the food
- Lot and premises identification
- Business name and street address
- Ingredients (including characterising ingredients as a percentage of the final food)
- Nutritional information
- Best before or use-by dates
- Storage and preparation directions
- Mandatory advisory warnings (e.g. ingredients known to cause allergic reactions)
- Country of origin
- Net weight

When creating your label it is very important that your label complies with the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (CCA). The Act also requires food labelling to comply with the Food Standards Code. Chapter 1 provides information on labelling.

For more information on labelled food please see the following link:

<https://www.business.gov.au/info/run/goods-and-services/selling-goods-and-services/selling-goods/product-labelling>

For details on labelling packaged food for retail sale, see the following link:

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/259242/DHHS_Guide_to_Labelling_Packaged_Food_Sep_2017.pdf.

Country of origin labelling

In Australia, new country of origin labelling laws have been introduced under Australian Consumer Law. This means food products packaged from 1 July 2018 must comply with these new regulations.

The main change to current requirements is that the labels for most food that is grown, produced or made in Australia must include a logo (kangaroo in a triangle symbol), as well as a bar chart and text statement to show the proportion of Australian ingredients.

The new laws only apply to food currently required to be labelled with country of origin under the Food Standards Code: that is, food offered for retail sale in Australia. They do not apply to food sold in places like restaurants, cafes, takeaway outlets or schools.

In addition, there are some non-priority food for which additional graphics and information requirements are not compulsory. Non-priority foods only require a text statement of origin on their labels. Non-priority foods include seasonings, confectionery, biscuits and snack food, bottled water, soft drinks and sports drinks, tea and coffee and alcoholic beverages.

More information on country of origin labelling see the following link <https://www.foodlabels.industry.gov.au>

Contact: Department of Industry, Innovation and Science – Country of Origin Labelling

Phone: 13 28 46

Email: originlabelling@industry.gov.au

Packaging

The purpose of packaging is to:

- keep the product contained for transportation e.g. keep liquids contained
- prevent contamination from micro-organisms, pollution or vermin
- prevent physical product damage
- keep the product in peak condition
- protect against dehydration or dampness
- protect the product's nutritional and sensory characteristics
- maximise product shelf life.

It is sometimes necessary to design packaging that is shaped to contain a particular food, e.g. egg boxes, so that the product is held securely and well protected from damage.

The overall design of packaging, including shape, packaging materials and labelling, helps identify the type of product it contains and for whom it is intended. It may also give a sense of quality, e.g. that it has been handmade.

When designing packaging it is important to consider the following:

- Is it easy to unwrap and open?
- How will it stand up to handling and transportation (ie. changes in storage conditions such as light, humidity and temperature)?
- Is it a convenient shape, and easy to stack?
- What size print should be used? Can it be read easily?
- Will it be economical to produce?
- Which colours will be used on the packaging, and what will appeal to the target market?

- Are there any environmental considerations? (Will it be recyclable?)

What types of packaging are available?

There are a number of different materials and shapes available including cans, paper, cardboard, foil, a range of plastics, cellulose and glass. These containers have different attributes including:

- Cans were traditionally made from tin plate sheet, but now aluminium is more commonly used (for drinks). The inside of the can be sheet coated with lacquer to prevent the cans rusting and reacting with the contents, especially acidic foods.
- Paper, board and foil are commonly used to package foods. Board used for food packaging is often coated with a wax of polythene to prevent interaction with the contents.
- Most paper or board should be discarded before heating, but some products frozen on specially treated board may be cooked in microwave ovens.
- Foil trays are suitable for both freezing and heating in conventional ovens.

Food packaging uses a wide range of both rigid and flexible materials including:

- Polythene:
 - Low density is used as a film wrapping, resistant to water.
 - High density is used for 'boil-in-the-bag' products.
- Polyamide (nylon) – provides a very good barrier to oxygen, so is used for vacuum packaging, especially for foods containing fat (which can be susceptible to oxidation).
- Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) rigid plastic bottles are light-weight, have little risk of breakage and keep the fizz in carbonated drinks.
- Polystyrene is expanded polythene used for trays and insulated containers to keep food products cold, such as ice cream and sorbets or hot, such as coffee, soup and burgers.
- Cellulose films - used for different types of food packaging, because they have a range of characteristics such as different degrees of moisture proofing. Some cellulose films are heat sealable. They can be used, for window patches in cartons.
- Glass has been used for food packaging for a long time, but tougher, lightweight containers, sometimes protected by a sleeve of expanded polystyrene, have been developed. Glass is still very popular and is used exclusively for many products such as jam and drinks. Glass containers are also recyclable without loss of quality.
- Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) is a technique used to lengthen the shelf-life of food products of minimally processed or fresh foods. The air surrounding the food in the package is changed to reduce the activity of microorganisms. Meat, fish, fruits and vegetables often use this packaging method.
- Equilibrium modified atmosphere packaging (EMAP) is used primarily for fruit and vegetables: Either the pack is flushed with the required gas mix, or the produce is sealed within the pack with no modification of the atmosphere. EMAP has been shown to delay the maturation and softening of vegetables and to reduce chlorophyll degradation, microbial spoilage and enzymatic browning. It can also inhibit undesirable pinking on prepared leafy green salad vegetables.

Environmentally friendly packaging

There is a range of environmentally friendly disposable packaging available in Australia. Eco-friendly packaging, also known as green or sustainable packaging, is easily recycled or is biodegradable (i.e. completely breaks down in landfill and decomposes into natural elements within a short time after disposal) and is considered safe for the environment. The environmentally friendly packaging includes:

- Paper and cardboard – eco-friendly options are created with a high proportion of recycled paper.
- Corn starch – items made from this are biodegradable and are ideal for temporary use such as takeaway food containers. .
- Bubble wrap – eco-friendly options are made from recycled polythene and some can be completely degradable.
- Biodegradable plastic – commonly used in plastic shopping bags. This material starts to decompose when exposed to daylight and can be in some circumstances a suitable alternative to traditional plastics.

There is a national covenant (or agreement) to reduce the environmental impacts on consumer packaging in Australia. The Australian Packaging Covenant 2017, sets out the goals and obligations between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the packaging industry in Australia. In April 2018, a target was set for 100 per cent of Australian packaging be recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025 or earlier to cut down on the amount of waste Australia produces. The 100 per cent target will be delivered by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation, working with its 950 member companies.

For more information go to link: <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/national-waste-policy/publications/australian-packaging-covenant-2017>

Packaging regulations

In Tasmania, the *Food Act 2003* has general provisions for packaging and handling which make it a criminal offence to sell food that is unsafe or will make food unsafe to consume.

Tasmanian food businesses must comply with packaging requirements in the Food Standards Code.

Requirements in the Code pertinent to packaging include (but are NOT limited to):

- Standard 1.4.1 – Contaminants and Natural Toxicants. It sets out the maximum levels of some contaminants that may be present in food as a result of contact with packaging material.
- Standard 1.4.3 – Articles in Contact with Food. It sets out the maximum levels for a number of metal and non-metal contaminants and natural toxicants that may be present in food as a result of contact with packaging materials.
- Standard 2.6.2 – Requirements for chemical limits in packaged water which align with World Health Organization drinking water guidelines (WHO, 2011)
- Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements, contains requirements for food businesses (including manufacturers, importers and retailers) regarding the safety of packaging. It has specific requirements for food businesses to ensure that when packaging food, only packaging material that is fit for its intended use and is not likely to cause food contamination may be used. State and territory Food Acts also make reference to food packaging safety.

Measurement laws

Businesses that sell goods by measurement, or that manufacture, pack, import or sell pre-packaged goods, are required to comply with the Australian trade measurement under the [National Measurement Act 1960](#) and the [National Trade Measurement Regulations 2009](#).

For more information on measurement requirements go to link

<https://www.business.gov.au/info/run/goods-and-services/selling-goods-and-services/selling-goods/australias-trade-measurement-laws>

Contact Trade Measurement - Hobart

Address: 15A Lampton Avenue, Derwent Park, TAS 7009

Phone: 1300 686 664

Website <http://www.measurement.gov.au/Industry/Pages/default.aspx>

Email: info@measurement.gov.au

For more information

For more information on food safety requirements go to link,

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/food_safety

Contact: Department of Health and Human Services

Phone: the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738

Email: public.health@dhhs.tas.gov.au

In addition, you should contact your local council to speak with an Environmental Health Officer. To find details of your local council visit: <https://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=225>

Other information on food and beverage labelling and packaging:

<http://australiantradelinks.com.au/page/elearning/labelling-and-packaging/labelling>

Wine labelling: <https://www.wineaustralia.com/labelling>

Alcoholic beverage labelling:

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/userguide/Documents/Guide%20to%20Labelling%20of%20Alcoholic%20Beverages.pdf>

On starting a food business:

<https://www.foodsafety.com.au/resources/articles/everything-you-need-to-know-about-starting-a-food-business>

https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0005/224618/Fact_sheet_establishing_a_food_buiness_MAy2106.pdf

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