

Labelling – Date marking, storage conditions and directions for use

Introduction

The NSW Food Authority (the Authority) is responsible for administering the labelling provisions of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code). The Authority also administers the *NSW Food Act 2003*, including sections relating to the provision of information that can mislead the consumer.

What are the requirements of the Code regarding such labelling information?

The Code prescribes a date marking system for packaged foods. This includes the form in which these foods must be date marked to indicate the shelf life of the product. The manufacturer is responsible for determining the shelf life of food products and must be able to substantiate the indicated storage period to the enforcement authority.

The Code also requires the manufacturer to include on the label a statement of any specific conditions required to ensure that the food will keep for the period indicated by the date mark, eg refrigerate after opening.

Where, for reasons of health and safety, the consumer needs to be informed of directions for use of a food, these need to be included on the label.

Foods not requiring a date mark

Foods that do not require a date mark include:

- foods when the 'best before' date is two years or more,
- an individual portion of ice-cream or ice-confection,
- foods contained in a small package (under 100 square centimetres), except where the food should be consumed before a certain date for health or safety reasons, and
- foods that are exempt from the general labelling provisions of the Code (see related factsheet *Labelling – General requirements*).

Use-by statement

A 'use-by' date is the date after which the intact package of food, if stored under the conditions specified on the label, should not be consumed because of health and safety reasons.

It is illegal to sell food which has passed its 'use-by' date.

Best before statement

Foods marked 'best before' are safe to be consumed provided the food is otherwise fit for human consumption.

These foods can be expected to retain their colour, taste, texture and flavour provided they have been stored correctly.

Foods date marked 'best before' can be sold after that date, provided the food is not deteriorated or perished.

About the NSW Food Authority

The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled.

It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

More information

For other factsheets on labelling requirements:

- visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

Note

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).