

Labelling: date marking, storage conditions and directions for use

Standard 1.2.5 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) outlines how packaged foods must be marked to indicate their shelf life.

Packaged foods must be date marked to show their shelf life when stored according to specific storage instructions. Manufacturers are usually responsible for determining date marks and proving they are accurate. They must also list any conditions that need to be followed to ensure the food will keep for the period indicated, such as 'refrigerate after opening'.

Where directions for use are required for health and safety reasons, such as cooking instructions, they must also be included on the label.

Use by date

A 'use by' is the date after which food in an intact package, stored as specified on the label, should not be eaten for health and safety reasons. It is illegal to sell food past its 'use by' date.

Best before date

Foods marked with a 'best before' date may be safe to eat after that date, as long as it is not damaged, deteriorated or perished. If stored as directed in an unopened package, the food can be expected to retain its colour, taste, texture and flavour up to the best before date.

Food marked with a 'best before' date can be sold after that date if fit for human consumption.

When a date mark is not required:

- when the 'best before' date is 2 years or more
- individual portions of ice cream or ice confection
- foods contained in a small package (less than 100 square centimetres), except where the food should have a use by date
- foods exempt from the general labelling provisions of the Code (see factsheet [Labelling – General requirements](#) (PDF, 135 KB)).

More information

- Visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- Contact the Food Authority helpline:
 - Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
 - Phone 1300 552 406