

Allergen labelling

In Australia the majority of recalls are due to undeclared allergens in packaged foods. This information is for food businesses that must be aware of labelling requirements eg manufacturers, importers, retailers, caterers, home businesses and food sold at markets.

Food allergy is very serious, causing illness and even death. Food allergies occur in around 1 in 20 children and 1 in 50 adults. The most severe allergic reaction is known as anaphylaxis – which is potentially life threatening.

Food allergens

Even very small amounts of an allergen in food can trigger a reaction. The most common things that trigger reactions in Australia are listed in the [Food Standards Code](#) Standard 1.2.3:

- > Peanuts
- > Egg
- > Sesame seeds
- > Tree nuts
- > Crustaceans (shellfish)
- > Soybeans
- > Milk and milk products
- > Fish
- > Lupin

Cereals containing gluten namely, wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt and their hybridised strains

Added sulphites (in amounts greater than 10mg/Kg)

Labelling requirements

Different requirements may apply to how food is labelled. Refer to the [Food Standards Code](#) PART 1.2 Labelling and other information requirements.

This fact sheet provides general information for businesses that are required to provide labelling, but it is the responsibility of food businesses to ensure they are correctly labelling products.

Packaged foods

Food businesses that make or import packaged foods must meet the labelling requirements for allergens set out in Standard 1.2.3 (Warning Statements, Advisory Statements and Declarations) of the Code.

There are different ways allergens may be declared on a food package label:

- > In brackets: wheat flour (contains wheat and gluten), sugar, butter (contains milk), salt, flavour (contains wheat starch). May contain traces of nuts.
- > In bold: **wheat** flour (contains **wheat** and **gluten**), sugar, butter (contains **milk**), salt, flavour (contains **wheat** starch). May contain traces of **nuts**.
- > In a separate declaration: for example, Ingredients: wheat flour, sugar, butter, salt, flavour. Allergen warning: wheat, gluten and milk. May contain traces of nuts.

Other ways a business may label allergens include:

- > “Contains” means the product contains the ingredient and is intended as an ingredient.
- > “Allergen ingredient free” labelling claims for “free” may only be made where a food contains no detectable trace, for example, “Gluten Free” or “Dairy Free” [Standard 1.2.8].
- > “May contain” means that during harvest, storage or manufacture, the product may have been unintentionally cross contaminated with an allergen and the product may be a risk to the allergic consumer. These statements are not a regulatory requirement, but a business may use them to provide extra information to the consumer.



Where a packaged food is found to have an undeclared allergen, a recall or withdrawal will be required. Fines can apply under the *Food Act 2001*.

The type of businesses that must comply with these labelling requirements include:

- > **Manufacturers:** Manufacturers are responsible for managing the presence of food allergens and ensuring their products are clearly and accurately labelled.
- > **Importers:** Importers are responsible for ensuring their imports are properly labelled in accordance with Australian labelling legislation and for providing clear and accurate information about the allergen status of their product.
- > **Home businesses and market stalls:** All food businesses must comply with the Food Standards Code. Be allergy aware and either label packaged food as required by the Food Standards Code, or have allergen information available for unpackaged foods, or foods not required to have a label. Information can be found here:
 - o <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodsafety/standards/Pages/Home-based-food-businesses.aspx>
 - o <https://farmersmarkets.org.au/wp-content/uploads/AFMA-Farmers-Market-Food-Safety-Guide-Aug-15.pdf>

Food that is exempt from bearing a label

- > **Retail:** Where a food for sale is not required to have a label (eg a bakery where the products are made and packaged on the premises where it is sold, or an assisted display cabinet, or where the food is packaged in the presence of the purchaser), product information such as ingredients and allergens must be available and either:
 - o displayed on or in connection with the display of food; or,
 - o provided to the purchaser upon request either verbally or in writing.

When a customer identifies that they have a dietary requirement such as a food allergy or intolerance, you have a legal responsibility to help the customer by providing accurate information about what the food is made from. You must specify whether any ingredients contain allergens or may contain allergens. This means staff should always consult with their supervisor about the existence of allergens present in the foods sold to ensure that correct information is provided.

- > **Caterers:** Foods sold for catering purposes has some very specific labelling requirements set out in the Food Standards Code, and information about allergens must always be on the label or accompany the food.

Responsibility to recall

All food businesses engaged in wholesale supply, manufacture or importation of food must have a system in place to ensure the recall of unsafe food [Standard 3.2.2-12]. If labelling fails to declare the allergens that are present, the food business must recall the affected product.

Information about how to recall food can be found on the FSANZ website

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/conduct/Pages/HowToRecallFood.aspx>

An Industry Protocol is also available:

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/firp/Pages/default.aspx>

Visit the [FSANZ recall page](#) for up to date information.

For more information

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