

Product labelling – What are the requirements?

Under Australian law dairy manufacturers must label their food with information that allows consumers to make informed choices about the product. This note outlines the current legal requirements.

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code)

The Code provides the basis of all food labelling laws in Australia and should be used as the first point of reference for information relating to food labelling.

The Code is developed and maintained by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). All parts of the Code are freely available and can be downloaded through the [FSANZ website](#). The Code is an essential tool for those responsible for designing product labels, and manufacturers are advised to review all of the labelling standards, and identify those applicable to their product range.

Dairy Food Safety Victoria (DFSV) audits of dairy manufacturers include verifying compliance to the labelling requirements of the Code.

Labelling standards

The majority of labelling requirements within the Code are contained in Chapter 1: General Food Standards, Part 1.2 – *Labelling and other Information Requirements* under the following Standards:



- 1.2.1 Application of Labelling and Other Information Requirements
- 1.2.2 Food Identification Requirements
- 1.2.3 Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations
- 1.2.4 Labelling of Ingredients
- 1.2.5 Date Marking of Packaged Food
- 1.2.6 Directions for Use and Storage
- 1.2.7* Nutrition, Health and Related Claims
- 1.2.8 Nutrition Information Requirements
- 1.2.9 Legibility Requirements
- 1.2.10 Characterising Ingredients and Components of Food
- 1.2.11 Country of Origin Requirements

Standard 1.2.7 was introduced in January 2013 to regulate nutrient content and health claims on food labels and advertisements. It will replace transitional Standard 1.1A in January 2016. Until this time, food businesses that choose to make such voluntary claims or statements are required to comply with either Standard 1.1A or 1.2.7 (not both).

Additional standards on labelling

Other sections of the Code also address labelling and claims and may be applicable to some dairy products.

- Standard 1.1.1 (clauses 11–13) covers prohibition on altering labels, modifying information statements and labelling provisions when advertising.
- Standard 1.3.2 covers claims that can be made for the presence of vitamins or minerals.
- Standards 1.5.1, 1.5.2 and 1.5.3 cover conditions for labelling novel foods, genetically modified foods and irradiated foods.
- Standards 2.9.1 – 2.9.5 covers a range of special purpose foods that have particular labelling requirements. These include infant formula products, foods for infants, formulated meal replacement and supplementary foods, formulated supplementary sports foods, and foods for special medical purposes.

Food Standards Code user guides

FSANZ also publishes [user guides](#) which assist manufacturers in understanding and interpreting labelling standards.

Users need to be aware that the Code is frequently updated so the information in these guides needs to be checked to ensure it is still current. Unlike the Code itself, the user guides are not legally binding, unless specific reference is made to some other legislative instrument such as a mandatory Code of Practice

Other regulatory requirements relating to food labelling

Food Act 1984 (Victoria)

This Act details the legal obligations for a manufacturer of food sold in Victoria. It includes the maximum penalties that can be imposed on individuals or corporations found guilty of non-compliance.

Trade Practices Act 1974

This federal legislation was initiated to prevent and discourage misleading and deceptive representations about food. Compliance with these consumer protection laws is overseen by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

National Measurement Act 1960

The National Trade Measurement Regulations 2009 describe the applications of this Act relating to packaged product weight or volume recording requirements, and are regulated by the National Measurement Institute (NMI). This includes size and position of the measurement markings, units of measurement and the symbols that can be used, and the name and address of the food packer.

Export of dairy products

Most (bovine) dairy products intended for export are defined as 'prescribed goods' under the Export Control Act 1982, which are administered by the Department of Agriculture.

The specific export labelling requirements for prescribed goods can be found in Schedule 7 of the [Export Control \(Milk and Milk Products\) Orders 2005](#), and manufacturers of export products will need to be familiar with them.

Manufacturers of prescribed goods for export require Department of Agriculture registration, and are allocated a site-specific registration/establishment number. The final manufacturer's registration number, identifying lot or batch

number, as well as the other components listed in the Food Standards Code, must all be included on the product trade description (label).

In addition to complying with Department of Agriculture trade descriptions, there may also be importing country requirements that need to be met. Alternatively, there may be exemptions that are allowed by specific importing countries. Advice and approvals of these aspects will need to be obtained through the [Department of Agriculture](#).

Key points to consider

- Manufacturers are obliged to comply with laws that apply to the labelling of foods.
- DFSV audits compliance with labelling requirements.
- The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code is the basis of most mandatory labelling requirements for food manufactured in Australia.
- The Code is supported and complemented by other state and federal legislation.
- Standards change over time, and it is the responsibility of a dairy manufacturer to be aware of this, and to ensure that product label descriptions comply with the current laws.

References

[Australia New Zealand Food Standards](#)

[Food Standards Code user guides](#)

[Food Act 1984](#)

[Trade Practices Act 1974](#)

[National Trade Measurement Regulations 2009](#)

[National Measurement Institute, Prepackaged Goods, Labelling requirements](#)

[Department of Agriculture, Export Control \(Milk and Milk Products\) Orders 2005](#)