Nutrition labelling rules explained

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Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, amending Regulations (EC) No 1924/2006 and (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EEC, Council Directive 90/496/EEC, Commission Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC and Commission Regulation (EC) No 608/2004 T

Update

Background information summarising nutrition labelling rules.

Background

The rules of nutrition labelling are set out in section 3 of Regulation 1169/2011.

Nutrition declaration

Prepacked food sold in the EU must be labelled with information about its energy and nutrient content. This nutrition declaration must appear directly on the package, or on a label attached to the package. It must include:

- energy value
- amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt.

The following nutrients can be included voluntarily in the nutrition declaration:

- mono-unsaturates
- polyunsaturates
- polyols
- starch
- fibre
- any of the vitamins or minerals permitted by law.

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Exceptions

Certain foods do not require a nutrition declaration. These are listed in Annex V of the Regulation.

Calculating energy values

The values in the nutrition declaration are averages based on either the manufacturer's analysis of the food, or a calculation using:

- known or actual average values of the ingredients used
- generally established and accepted data.

These values are of the food as it is sold: if a product requires preparation for consumption, information can reflect the nutrition values of the food when eaten. The energy value must be:

- calculated using the conversion factors provided in Annex XIV
- indicated in kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal) per 100 g or per 100 ml.

Nutrient amounts must be indicated per 100 g or per 100 ml.

In some cases, energy values and nutrient amounts may also be expressed per portion and/or per consumption unit (Art. 33).

Vitamins and minerals

Their amounts must be expressed:

- per 100 g or per 100 ml
- as a percentage of reference intakes.

Authorised vitamins and minerals and their reference intakes are listed in Annex XIII, part A.1.

Presenting the nutrition declaration

Where space allows, the nutrition declaration should be in table form. If the package is too small, the declaration should be in linear format. All information must be easily visible, clearly legible and written in letters at least 1.2 mm tall.

The values should be presented in the order set out in Annex XV.

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Timeline

A revision of Regulation 1169/2011 was expected in the second half of 2023 as part of a broader review of food information to consumers. However, the Commission has indicated that work on the proposal is still ongoing. This is expected to include a revision of nutrition labelling rules, potentially introducing front-of-pack labelling and specific graphical images (e.g. Nutri-Score-style labelling).

Resources

European Commission (2018) Commission notice on questions and answers on the application of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers.

UK Department of Health (2016) Technical guidance on nutrition labelling.

Sources

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011

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