



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Note

---

Paper 77/13

22nd April 2013

NIAR 250-13

**Mark Allen**

# Future EU food labelling regulations – Spring 2013

## 1 Existing EU food labelling regulations

At EU level, responsibility for food labelling lies with Directorate General (DG) Health and Consumers.

Directive 2000/13/EC which was adopted on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000, is the main piece of EU legislation regarding the general labelling of foodstuffs. The focus of the Directive is very much on providing consumers with accurate information on food products under headings including:

- composition of the product;
- the manufacturer;
- methods of storage and preparation
- substances known as allergens must always be indicated on the label (these are defined in Annex IIIa)
- Prohibition of claims on any food that it prevents, treats or cures a human disease

Food producers and manufacturers can also choose to, but are not obligated to, provide additional information on food, providing that the information is accurate and not misleading.

There are also specific EU food labelling requirements for particular foods, with beef<sup>1</sup> being a good example in that since January 2002, beef labels must include precise information about where the animal was born and reared as well as the place of fattening, slaughtering and cutting.

These current regulations apply until the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

## 2 Future EU food labelling regulations

On 25 October 2011, the European Parliament and Council adopted Regulation EC1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC), now commonly referred to as the 'FIC Regulation'

Regulation 1169/2011 is effectively a consolidation and amalgamation of two pre-existing Directives, namely

- the previously mentioned 2000/13/EC; and
- 90/496/EEC – which deals with the nutritional labelling of foodstuffs

The FIC Regulation entered into force on 12 December 2011. It will apply from the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2014, with the exception of the provisions concerning the nutrition declaration, which will apply from 13 December 2016.

Key features of EC1169/2011 include the following requirements:

- nutritional information on processed foods;
- origin labelling of fresh meat from pigs, sheep, goats and poultry;
- highlighting of allergens e.g. peanuts or milk in the list of ingredients;
- better legibility i.e. minimum size of text;
- requirements on information on allergens also cover non pre-packed foods including those sold in restaurants and cafés.

## 2 Specific issues relating to food origin labelling

With specific regards to food origin labelling, as set out in section 2 of this briefing note, the FIC Regulation includes requirements for origin labelling on fresh meat derived from pigs, sheep, goats and poultry.

Mandatory food origin labelling already applies to a range of foods within the EU including:

- honey
- fruit and vegetables

---

<sup>1</sup> [Regulation \(EC\) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation \(EC\) No 820/97](#)

- fish
- beef and beef products
- olive oil
- wine
- eggs
- imported poultry
- and spirits drinks

As part of the process of enacting the FIC Regulation, the European Commission is obligated to submit a report to the European Parliament and Council on the application of rules on voluntary origin labelling of foods and on the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance of meat used as an ingredient. In relation to mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance, the report will consider the following seven food categories<sup>2</sup>:

- Types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry;
- Milk;
- Milk used as an ingredient in dairy products;
- Meat used as an ingredient;
- Unprocessed foods;
- Single ingredient products;
- Ingredients that constitute over 50% of a food

The report will evaluate the feasibility of establishing mandatory food origin labelling for these seven food categories and will also aim to assess the impacts in terms of costs and benefits from such a move.

Whilst meat used as an ingredient is included as a food category, the explicit mention of processed foods is a notable omission from the list of food categories being considered. This issue has a particular resonance given the recent mislabelled horsemeat scandal which focussed attention on many processed food products across the EU.

The Commission is required to submit this report by the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013, but current indications suggest that this date may well be brought forward, as a direct result of the ongoing mislabelled horsemeat scandal across the EU. In light of the report findings and aforementioned meat scandal, the Commission may also choose to bring forward proposals to modify the existing EU rules on food labelling, but there is no confirmation that this will happen at this time.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Study on the application of rules on voluntary origin labelling of foods and on the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance of meat used as an ingredient, Terms of Reference, DG SANCO, June 2012](#)