businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Labelling of meat: country of origin

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

This guidance is for Scotland

The Country of Origin of Certain Meats (Scotland) Regulations 2016 cover labelling meat from swine, sheep, goats and poultry with their countries of rearing and slaughter. See 'Labelling of beef' for information about meat from cows.

Certain prescribed information is compulsory for fresh, chilled and frozen pork, lamb, mutton, goat meat and poultry meat at all stages in the supply chain, from slaughter to final retail or catering. Other information may be applied to these products as long as it is not misleading.

This information must be provided on the label with the packaging. The requirement only applies to prepacked meat intended for supply to the final consumer or to mass caterers.

A robust traceability system must be in place for all stages in the supply chain.

The Regulations do not apply to meat-containing products (see 'Composition of products containing meat' for details of what constitutes a 'product containing meat').

Compulsory information

Fresh, chilled and frozen pig, sheep, goat and poultry meat

The following information must be provided on all fresh, chilled and frozen pork, lamb, mutton, goat meat and poultry meat supplied to mass caterers or the final consumer:

- 'Reared in: [name of Member State or non-EU country. Where an animal has been reared in more than one country, the table below explains what must appear on the labelling]'
- 'Slaughtered in: [name of Member State or non-EU country]'
- A reference number or batch code identifying the specific animal or group of animals from which the meat was derived

'Member State' means Member State of the EU; bear in mind that the UK is no longer a Member State, so you must not refer to it as such.

Where the rearing period referred to in the table above is not attained in any of the Member States or non-EU countries where the animal was reared (for example, when slaughtered at over six months but did not spend the last four months being raised in a single country), the indication referred to in the first bullet point above must be replaced by 'Reared in: several Member States of the EU'; or, where the meat or the animals have been imported into the EU, by 'Reared in: several non-EU countries' or 'Reared in: several EU and non-EU countries'. However, where the food business operator has evidence to prove that the rearing period was spent in specific Member States and/or non-EU countries, these countries may be stated in the form of a list.

Where it can be proved that animals were born, raised and slaughtered in the same Member State or non-EU country, then the first and second compulsory requirements in the bulleted list above can be replaced by 'Origin: [name of Member State]' or 'Origin: [name of non-EU country]'.

Where compulsory information is not available for meat imported from a non-EU country, the labelling must show at least the words 'Reared in: non-EU' and 'Slaughtered in [name of non-EU country]'.

Identifying the country of rearing on labelling

Swine	Sheep and goats	Poultry
Slaughtered at over six months: the country where the last rearing period of at least four months took place	**Slaughtered at over six months:** the country where the last rearing period of at least six months took place	**Slaughtered at over one month:** the country where the last rearing period of at least one month took place

Swine	Sheep and goats	Poultry
Slaughtered at under six months with live weight of at least 80 kg: the country where the animal was reared since it weighed 30 kg	**Slaughtered at under six months:** the country where the whole rearing period took place	**Slaughtered at under one month:** the country where the whole rearing period after the animal was placed for fattening took place
Slaughtered at under six months with live weight of below 80 kg: the country where the whole rearing period took place	N/A	N/A

Prepacked cut meat with different origins

Where several pieces of meat (whether of the same or different species) that would require different origin declarations are supplied to a mass caterer or the final consumer in the same pack, the origin information must be provided in the form of a list for each species. The batch code is also required.

Minced meat and trimmings

'Trimmings' are defined as small pieces of meat produced exclusively during trimming operations, when boning carcases or cutting up meat.

Minced meat and trimmings are permitted to be labelled in one of the ways below if more specific information as to their origin is not available:

- 'Origin: EU', if the minced meat or trimmings derive exclusively from animals born, reared and slaughtered in different Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: EU', if the minced meat or trimmings derive exclusively from animals reared and slaughtered in different Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: non-EU', if the minced meat or trimmings derive exclusively from meat imported into the EU
- 'Reared in: non-EU' and 'Slaughtered in: EU', if the minced meat or trimmings derive exclusively from animals imported into the EU for slaughter and slaughtered in one or more different Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: EU and non-EU', if the minced meat or trimmings are derived from animals reared and slaughtered in one or more different Member States and from meat imported into the EU; or from animals imported into the EU and slaughtered in one or more different Member States

'Member State' means Member State of the EU; bear in mind that the UK is no longer a Member State, so you must not refer to it as such.

Protected food names

Products with 'protected designation of origin' or 'protected geographical indication' must show all compulsory information listed at the start of this guide. More information on protected food and drink names is available on the GOV.UK website.

Traceability

Food business operators at each stage of production and distribution of the meat (including packaging and labelling it for the final consumer) must have an identification and registration system in place.

In particular, a record must be kept of the arrival and departure from the food business establishment of animals, carcases or cuts (as appropriate) to ensure a correlation between such arrivals and departures.

The purpose is to ensure that the information provided to the mass caterer or final consumer corresponds to that relating to the batch where the meat came from.

Additional voluntary information

Supplementary information concerning the provenance of the meat is permitted, but must comply with Chapter V of assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers* in that it must not mislead the consumer, or be ambiguous or confusing for the consumer, and (where appropriate) it must be based on relevant scientific data.

The Pork Provenance code of practice, concerning the provision of information about the conditions under which pigs have been reared, is an example of where such additional information may be provided.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

> In Scotland, food labelling laws are not generally enforced by Trading Standards services, but rather by Environmental Health. However, we have included In-depth Guides on food for Scotland in order to provide more comprehensive guidance.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: May 2026

Key legislation

- Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers*
- Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1337/2013 *laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 as regards the indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for fresh, chilled and frozen meat of swine, sheep, goats and poultry*
- Food Information (Scotland) Regulations 2014
- Country of Origin of Certain Meats (Scotland) Regulations 2016

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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