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trading standards law explained

Sandwich labelling

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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 England and Wales

There are different labelling requirements depending on whether sandwiches are sold by mass caterers and/or sold non-prepacked, prepacked or prepacked for direct sale. Prepacked labelling requirements are significantly more complex.

The term 'sandwich' includes a roll, bap, baguette, pitta, wrap, panini, bagel and all similar products.

Mass caterers

A mass caterer is any premises (including a vehicle or a stall) at which food is prepared ready for consumption by consumers without any further preparation. The food can be prepared in advance or at the point of ordering, and consumption can be on or off the premises. Mass caterers include pubs, restaurants, cafés, stalls, school canteens, vans and sandwich bars.

The following information is required:

- the presence of any allergenic ingredients
- the presence of any irradiated or genetically modified ingredients

The information does not have to be labelled on the product and can instead be placed on a notice. The notice must be visible / available at the point(s) where the consumer can place an order (at the counter, in the menu if food can be ordered at the table, etc).

Allergen information can be given verbally, in which case a notice must be placed on display inviting customers to ask a member of staff for allergen information.

Full information on the provision of allergen information can be found in 'Food allergens and intolerance'.

You do not have to name the product, but any name or description given must be accurate. Areas that can cause problems are:

- butter / margarine
- ham / pork shoulder
- reformed or chopped and shaped meats
- seafood / crab 'sticks'
- cheese substitutes

If prepacked sandwiches are being sold from a mass caterer, the requirements for prepacked products (below) will apply.

Van sales

A van can be a mass caterer if it meets the above definition, in which case the rules for mass caterers apply. However, if you purchase prepacked sandwiches to sell from your van, the normal prepacked rules will apply (see below).

Non-prepacked sandwiches

Non-prepacked includes the following:

- **loose.** Food sold or displayed without any form of packaging
- **packaged at the request of the consumer.** Food sold or displayed without any form of packaging, but placed into packaging after purchase (for example, a sandwich placed into a paper bag)

These products can be prepared before being put on sale or at the time of ordering.

Non-prepacked food has the following labelling requirements:

- the name of the product
- a meat content declaration (QUID). Refer to 'Composition of products containing meat' for further information
- a declaration that the sandwich or ingredients have been irradiated and/or contain genetically modified material (where relevant)
- an indication of any of the 14 specified allergens that the sandwich contains, or a notice stating that this information is available on request

The information must be on a label attached to the product or on a notice in close proximity to the product.

Further information can be found in 'Labelling of non-prepacked foods'.

If you purchase sandwiches from another food business that are supplied without packaging, they will be non-prepacked, so you must follow the rules in this section of the guide.

If you purchase sandwiches from another food business that are supplied in packaging, these will be classed as prepacked. Please refer to 'Prepacked sandwiches' below.

Prepacked-for-direct-sale sandwiches

'Prepacked for direct sale' means food sold in packaging from the premises on which it was packaged, or a mobile stall or vehicle operated by the business that packed the food.

There are additional labelling requirements for food that is prepacked for direct sale (whether sold from a mass caterer or otherwise). Please refer to 'Labelling of prepacked-for-direct-sale foods' for further information.

Prepacked sandwiches

'Prepacked food' is defined in assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers* as "... food and the packaging into which it was put before being offered for sale, whether such packaging encloses the food completely or only partially, but in any event in such a way that the contents cannot be altered without opening or changing the packaging ...".

If you package sandwiches for sale to consumers from another premises that you operate, or to supply another food business that will sell them to consumers, then the sandwiches are prepacked.

Prepacked sandwiches require the following labelling:

- the name of the food
- an ingredients list
- the details of any allergenic ingredients
- quantitative ingredient declarations (QUID)
- a nutritional declaration
- durability date marking
- the name and address of the manufacturer
- storage instructions (where necessary)
- instructions for use (where necessary)
- origin marking (if the label would be misleading without it)

Manufacturers of small quantities directly supplying consumers, or supplying local retailers, may be exempt from the nutrition declaration requirement. Further detail can be found in 'Labelling of prepacked foods: nutrition declaration'.

If the product contains any of the 14 allergens below, they must be highlighted in the ingredients list:

- cereals containing gluten, such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut, and their hybridised strains
- peanuts (also called groundnuts)

- nuts, such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, macadamias and Queensland nuts
- fish
- crustaceans
- molluscs
- sesame seeds
- eggs
- milk and milk products (including lactose)
- soy beans
- celery
- lupin
- mustard
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites at levels above 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre expressed as SO_2

Further information can be found in 'Food allergens and intolerance'.

If applicable, the product will also need to be labelled with:

- an irradiation declaration
- a genetically-modified-material declaration
- a packaged-in-a-protective-atmosphere declaration
- specific declarations if sweeteners, sugars and sweeteners, aspartame, or polyols are present

A full explanation of how to label your products can be found in 'Labelling of prepacked foods: general' and the other guides on prepacked foods that it links to. Please note, however, that sandwiches are exempt from the requirement to provide a net quantity declaration.

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 this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: December 2025

Key legislation

- assimilated Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 *on food additives*
- assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers*
- Food Information Regulations 2014
- Food Information (Wales) Regulations 2014

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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