

Consultation Information Note

Topic: Guidance on Best Practice for Nutrition Tolerances for Labelling Declarations

Start date of consultation: Wednesday, 23rd November 2011

Closing date of consultation: Wednesday, 15th December 2011

Consultation details:

Currently in the European Union (EU) nutrition labelling is voluntary but becomes compulsory if a nutritional claim for a product is made or when a product is fortified. However, if product labels carry voluntary nutrition information the format must comply with the legislative requirements. Recently, the EU has consolidated the existing Directives 2000/13/EC and 90/496/EEC on labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs and nutrition labelling for foodstuffs, respectively into a new Regulation on Food Information to Consumers. Among a number of changes provided by the new Regulation will be the mandatory provision of nutrition information on pre-packaged foods. The Regulation will also list a number of foods which will be exempt from the obligation to provide nutrition information.

Nutrition tolerances are the acceptable variance of nutrition labelling of food in comparison with the actual nutrition content of the food. Nutrition tolerances are required for nutrition labelling as it's unreasonable to expect foods to always contain the exact nutrition levels labelled, due to natural variations and variations from production and during storage. However, nutrition content of foods should not deviate substantially from labelled values to the extent that consumers are misled. Currently, at EU level, mandatory nutrition tolerances for labelling of food have not been set, except in the case of the declaration of fat content in spreadable fats. Some Member States (MS) have developed best practice/national guidelines for nutrition tolerances. However, Ireland has no equivalent best practice/national guidelines on tolerances for nutrition labelling.

In 2010 the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) published a study examining the accuracy of nutrition declarations in a selection of pre-packaged food products available on the Irish market. Using data and findings from this report a working group of industry and regulatory representative was convened to develop guidance on the accuracy of nutrition declarations. If you have any comments on the proposed guidance please submit them by 5pm Wednesday, 14th December 2011 via any one of the following methods:

E-mail: consultation@fsai.ie,

Fax: (01) 8171301

Post: Consultations, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey St, Dublin1.