

# LABELLING ESSENTIALS

*Labels are an essential component of selling prepackaged meat products and have mandatory regulatory requirements.*

All prepackaged meat products sold in Ontario and across Canada, no matter if they are packaged in a municipally, provincially or federally inspected meat processing plant, are subject to the labelling requirements under the Food and Drugs Act (FDA), the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act (CPLA) and the Safe Foods for Canadians Act (SFCA) and the regulations made under them.

## What is a Prepackaged Meat (Food) Product?

### *Prepackaged:*

In respect of a food, means packaged in a container in the manner in which the food is ordinarily sold to - or used or purchased by - a person, and includes consumer prepackaged

### *Consumer Prepackaged:*

In respect of a food, means packaged in a container in the manner in which the food is ordinarily sold to or used or purchased by an individual - or in which the food may reasonably be expected to be obtained by an individual - without being repackaged, to be used for non-commercial purposes.

It is important to note that "prepackaged" foods are sold to a person, which encompasses both individuals and organizations, whereas "consumer prepackaged" foods are sold solely to individuals (that is to say, consumers).

## Bilingual Labelling

All mandatory information on food labels (except for the name and address of the person by, or for whom, the prepackaged product was manufactured, processed, produced or packaged for resale) must be shown in both official languages, French and English.

Labels may be exempt from bilingual labelling when they meet one of the following criteria:

- they are local products sold in a local area in which one of the official languages is the mother tongue of less than 10 percent of the residents; or
- are official test market products; or
- are specialty foods, as defined by the Food and Drug Regulations.

## Size of Information

All mandatory information appearing on the label of a prepackaged product must be printed with a minimum type height of 1.6 mm (1/16 inch), based on the lowercase letter "o" with some exceptions, e.g. Net Weight and shown -

- in a single colour of type that is a visual equivalent of 100% solid black type on a white background or a uniform neutral background with a maximum 5% tint of colour;

- in a single standard sans serif font that is not decorative and in a manner that the characters never touch each other or any differentiating feature
- in type of normal or condensed width that is not scaled down so that the characters take up less space horizontally and, if a nutrition facts table appears on the label, the width of type must be the same as that required for the type used to show the nutrients that appear in the nutrition facts table

## Common Name

The common name of a food must be shown on the principal display panel of the food label and is:

- the name of the food that is printed in boldface type, but not in italics, in the Standards of Identity Document or in the document entitled Common Names for Prepackaged Fish, prepared by the Agency and published on its website, as amended from time to time;
- the name of the food that is printed in boldface type, but not in italics, in a provision of the Food and Drug Regulations; or
- in any other case, the name by which the food is generally known or that identifies its function.

The common name of a product should not be misleading and should not misrepresent the origin, composition or identity of the product.

When a cut of meat is highlighted in the common name of a meat product such as burgers, ground meat products, patties or sausages, the meat must be sourced only from the applicable cut as defined by the Meat Cuts Manual.

## Net Quantity

The numerical declaration of the net quantity for standard weight products must be declared in metric units on the principal display panel on consumer packages.

The net quantity must be rounded to three figures, unless the net quantity is below 100, when it may be rounded to two figures.

The numerals in the net weight declaration must be shown in bold face type and in the size shown in the following table:

Area of Principal Display Surface		Min Type Height of Numerals	
square cm	square inches	mm	inches
≤ 32	≤ 5	1.6	1/16
> 32 to ≤ 258	> 5 to ≤ 40	3.2	1/8
> 258 to ≤ 645	> 40 to ≤ 100	6.4	1/4
> 645 to ≤ 2580	> 100 to ≤ 400	9.5	3/8
> 2580	> 400	12.7	1/2

## List of Ingredients

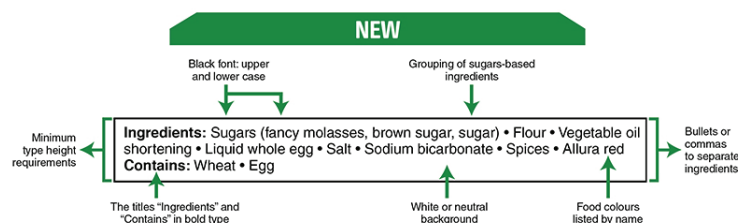
All prepackaged meat products with more than one ingredient must declare their ingredients and components in a list of ingredients. These must be declared by their common names in descending order of proportion by weight as determined before they are combined to make the food. Water and smoke are considered as ingredients and shall be listed as such.

Sugars-based ingredients must be grouped together in brackets after the name 'sugars' as this will help consumers identify all of the sources of sugars added to a food. Food colours must be listed by their individual common names. The list of ingredients must have the following format:

- making the text in black font on white or neutral background
- creating minimum type height requirements for ingredients
- using bullets or commas to separate ingredients
- using both upper and lower case letters for the ingredients in the list
  - the same format rules will apply to any 'contains' statement indicating the presence or potential presence of priority food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites.

Priority food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites must be declared by their source name either in the list of ingredients or in a "Contains" statement at the end of the ingredient listing. When the statement "Contains" is present on a label this statement must be complete and identify all common food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites at >10 ppm in the prepackaged product.

Figure 2. List of ingredients.



## Name and Principal Place of Business

All prepackaged foods that require a label must declare the name and principal place of business of the person by or for whom the food was manufactured, prepared, produced, stored, packaged or labelled.

### Name

The name declared on the label of prepackaged food identifies the person by whom or for whom the food was manufactured, prepared, produced, stored, packaged or labelled. The name must be complete and accurate enough to enable someone to get in touch with the person (definition) who operates the company.

For example, the name may be:

- The legal name under which the company operates
- E.g., ABC Company Inc.

## Principal Place of Business

The principal place of business must lead to a physical location where the "principal", or main, "business" can be found. Although a physical location is required to be declared on labels, the legislation does not prescribe the level of detail necessary, nor does it state that a "complete mailing address" is required.

## Meat Inspection Legend

The Meat Inspection Legend may only be applied by the registered/licensed operator and can only be applied to inspected meat products.

The Meat Inspection Legend will be in the following form and be no less the 10mm transverse measurement through the centre of the legend.



## Durable Shelf Life Statement

"Durable life" is the period, starting on the day a food is packaged for retail sale, that the food will retain its normal wholesomeness, palatability and nutritional value, when it is stored under conditions appropriate for that product.

A prepackaged meat product that has a durable life (shelf life) of 90 days or less must include the durable life date, otherwise known as best-before date, on the package or label. This date can be on any part of the package except for the bottom.

If the year is required for clarity, the durable life date must be given with the year first (at least the last two digits), followed by the month and then the day.

For example:

Best before  
04 JN 28  
Meilleur avant

The following are the acceptable bilingual short forms for the months of the year:

JA for JANUARY	JL for JULY
FE for FEBRUARY	AU for AUGUST
MR for MARCH	SE for SEPTEMBER
AL for APRIL	OC for OCTOBER
MA for MAY	NO for NOVEMBER
JN for JUN	DE for DECEMBER

## "Sell by", "Prepared on", "Freeze by", "Manufactured on" Dates

"Sell by" dates, "prepared on" dates, "freeze by" dates and "manufactured on" dates may be of value to the consumer or the manufacturer (e.g., lot codes) and therefore are not prohibited on food products, provided they are not misleading and the label meets appropriate requirements. However, they do not replace the requirements for "best before" dates and any dating system that has the same intent as durable life information must follow the prescribed manner of declaration.

## "Freeze by" Dates

It is acceptable to declare a "freeze by" date in addition to, and that is the same as, the "best before" date in a clear statement indicating that the product can be frozen if not consumed by the "best before" date.

For example:

Best before / Meilleur avant or Freeze by / Congelez avant  
June 28 juin

## Storage Instructions

Storage instructions are mandatory on edible meat products not considered as shelf stable that require a "best before" date which consist of one of the following statements, whichever is applicable:

Keep refrigerated / Garder au Froid  
or  
Keep frozen / Garder congelé

## Production Date or Lot Code

All meat products shall be labelled with the production date or with a code identifying the production lot. This code or date of production must appear on the immediate container of prepackaged meat products or on a tag attached to it.

## Retained Water Declaration

The amount of water added and retained in raw single-ingredient meat products due to post-evisceration contact with water, in excess of naturally occurring moisture must be declared as part of the product name on the principal display panel of prepackaged products.

Raw single-ingredient meat products include e.g. dressed carcasses, parts of dressed carcasses, offal and giblets.

## Nutrition Labelling

The Nutrition Facts table is mandatory for most prepackaged meat products. Prepackaged ground meat, ground meat by-product, ground poultry meat and ground poultry meat by-product must always carry a Nutrition Facts table.

The following products are exempt from displaying a Nutrition Facts table:

- raw, single-ingredient meat, meat by-product, poultry meat and poultry by-products;
- foods sold only in the retail establishment where the product is prepared and processed, including products made from a pre-mix when an ingredient other than water is added to the pre-mix; and
- individual servings of foods that are sold for immediate consumption (e.g. sandwiches or ready-made salads), when these have not been subjected to a process or special packaging, such as modified atmosphere packaging, to extend their durable life.

NEW	
Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
<b>Calories 110</b>	% Daily Value* % valeur quotidienne*
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22 %
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Potassium 470 mg	10 %
Calcium 26 mg	2 %
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0 %

\*5% or less is a little, 15% or more is a lot  
\*5% ou moins c'est peu, 15% ou plus c'est beaucoup

For more information, resources, or help with your program please contact:

Daphne, OIMP Technical Director  
(519) 763-4558 Ext 222 or  
technical@oimp.ca

