



# Food labelling



## POLICY INSIGHTS

**Labelling helps consumers to make informed choices about the food and drink that they buy. Food labelling can thus support the transition to sustainable food systems and facilitate the shift towards healthy, sustainable diets in the EU. It also reflects and promotes the cultural richness and diversity of EU food products. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays an enabling role in helping EU food systems take advantage of better labelling.**

Consumers rely on labelling as 'the face of food' to provide them with factual information about food attributes. There is a wide range of different public and private sector food labelling initiatives at EU, national, regional and local levels. This includes common labelling systems which, when applied properly, can help provide a level playing field for consumers and farmers and other stakeholders in food value chains.



Consistent and consolidated **food labelling** provides recognisable and reliable information for consumers about the characteristics of a product. An **EU legal framework** for consumer protection in relation to food information establishes the general principles, requirements and responsibilities governing food information and, in particular, food labelling.

This **obligatory EU legal framework** lays down the means to guarantee the right of consumers to information and procedures for the provision of food information, such as **nutrition declarations**. These take into account the need to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to future developments and new information requirements. Details about EU labelling requirements for specific food products are available via an interactive **Food Labelling Information System**. This multilingual online tool provides mandatory labelling information for dozens of different food and drink categories.

Europe's existing policy context for food labelling continues to evolve, including through the **Farm to Fork Strategy's** ambitions and the initiative for a **Sustainable EU food system**. Documents accompanying these policy developments include a **Report on front-of-pack nutrition labelling** and a **Commission Staff Working Document of the Evaluation of the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation**.

Labels promoting healthy diets can play pivotal roles in tackling the growth of **nutritional challenges** facing EU citizens. Labelling can also be harnessed to promote demand for sustainable farming and food systems that protect soil, reduce waste, improve welfare, care for nature and promote social equality, among other practices perceived by consumers as worthwhile (aiding possibilities for premium pricing).

CSP support can be used for communication actions aimed at promotion, communication and marketing, including actions and activities aimed, among other things, at raising consumer awareness about the importance of healthy diets through producer organisations, specialised farm advisory services or cooperation initiatives.



## Reliable labelling

Extensive **research and consultations** provide regular insights for policymakers about consumer trends vis-à-vis labelling developments. Findings confirm the key enabling roles of evidence-based approaches reinforcing the validity of labelling information. The reliability of rating systems and **algorithms** involved in objectively defining or scoring food characteristics are key factors for success in this context.



Techniques for validating front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) claims regarding food products are also advancing and a range of **useful lessons** have been learned in this regard concerning **health and nutrition**-related food labelling. For instance, the significance of nutrition labelling has escalated since the COVID 19 pandemic. Better and more uniform approaches to **defining nutritional quality** were already a policy priority for food labelling before the pandemic. The global health crisis further increased society's demand for more help in **understanding healthy eating habits**.



Existing FOPLs like **Nutri-score** are popular among both producers and consumers because they are easy to use (e.g. due to the use of colours and rating scales), but can also be sensitive. The interpretation of such a scoring system for food labels should be accompanied by wider public awareness campaigns. This is one way to help remind consumers that products with labels indicating differing nutritional scores may still be consumed in moderation as part of a balanced diet.

Food labelling remains a major topic for the EU's agri-food sector and **CAP national networks** are well placed to share their countries' experiences, ideas and insight in using CSPs to help improve the 'face of food' through product labelling.

