

## Comprehensive New EU Food Labeling Regulation Goes Into Effect December 13

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A **new food labeling regulation**, which revamps the entire EU regulatory framework on food information, including labeling, **starts to apply from this Saturday, 13 December 2014**. Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers ([FIC Regulation](#)) consolidates a number of EU food laws and establishes some new principles to provide better consumer protection in relation to food information whilst ensuring smooth functioning of the EU market.

The FIC Regulation governs all food information provided to the consumer through any commercial communication, including in particular labeling and websites. The Regulation affects all food business operators along the whole supply chain as it changes the existing provisions and introduces new ones:

- Mandatory minimum font size for required particulars on labels to increase legibility;
- More emphasized and available labeling of some 14 allergens and their derivatives (including nuts, gluten, soybean) for all foods including those without ingredient listing (like alcoholic beverages) and those sold loose and in restaurants;
- Mandatory nutrition labeling for most foods as from 13 December 2016;
- Significant changes to nutrition table including presentation of both total fat & saturated fat at the top of the nutrition table, second only to energy;
- Extended origin labeling;
- Clear indication of the ingredients present in the form of engineered nanomaterials ('nano')
- Obligatory information about the addition of water or other ingredients, such as vegetable proteins, for meat and fish;
- Mandatory information to be made available up-front in the case of distance selling including

by phone or internet.

The FIC Regulation is fully applicable from 13 December 2014, with the exception of nutrition labeling, which will apply from 13 December 2016. Companies that were not subject to nutrition labeling under the old rules have two more years to introduce a nutrition table. Companies that displayed a nutrition table under the old rules, because they were obliged to do so when making nutrition or health claims, or displayed such information on a voluntary basis, must adapt the nutrition table in accordance with the new rules. Importantly, the FIC Regulation also allows foods placed on the market or labelled prior to 13 December 2014 which do not comply with new requirements to be marketed until the stocks of the foods are exhausted.

Due to recent food fraud scandals throughout the EU, it is expected that there will be heightened enforcement of the FIC Regulation in the coming months to reassure consumers that they are appropriately informed about the food they consume. Finally, the FIC Regulation is not a rigid document as it provides sufficient flexibility to respond to future developments and new information requirements. We expect to see interesting developments and debates to follow in the food information area, particularly in relation to alcoholic beverages.

*Danuta Wawrzak contributed to this article.*

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