

# COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING FOR FRUIT & VEGETABLE RETAILERS

Country of origin labelling describes the country or countries where the food was grown, manufactured or packaged. It is not required for foods sold for immediate consumption by restaurants, canteens, caterers or self-catering institutions, prisons, hospitals or similar institutions (such as nursing homes, acute and care hospitals).

## Labelling laws

Country of origin labelling is regulated through Standard 1.2.11 under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code). The Standard applies to packaged and unpackaged foods. Under the Code, 'fruit and vegetables' includes nuts, spices, herbs, fungi, legumes and seeds.

## Labelling requirements for fruits and vegetables at a retail store

### Fresh fruits and vegetables

Unpackaged and packaged fresh whole or cut fruit and vegetables displayed for retail sale must have a label on or in connection with the display of the food that identifies the country or countries of origin of the food. The retailer must identify the country of origin of each specific type of fruit or vegetable they display for

sale. For example, Granny Smith apples – 'Product of Australia', and Fuji apples – 'Product of China'.

### Processed fruits and vegetables

Preserved, pickled, cooked, frozen or dehydrated fruits and vegetables that are unpackaged and not mixed with other food, require a label on or in connection with the display of the food that identifies the country or countries of origin of the food. The retailer must identify the country of origin of each specific type of fruit or vegetable they display for sale. For example, unpackaged dried apricots – 'Product of Turkey', and unpackaged dates – 'Product of Iran'.

### Labelling a mix of fruit or vegetables

For mixed fruit or vegetables, the label in connection with the display must state each country in which the food was produced, or make a

qualified claim. The qualified claim may state either that the food is a 'mix of local and imported foods' or a 'mix of imported foods' as the case may be. This requirement also applies to a mix of fruit or vegetables that come from several countries. For example, a display of lemons that contains lemons from both Australia and the USA mixed together can be labelled with the statement 'Product of Australia and Product of USA' or 'Mix of local and imported'.

## Size and legibility of labels

Statements on labels must be:

- in English
- legible to the average consumer, and
- distinct from the background.

Signs for unpackaged goods must be in type size of:

- at least 9 mm in height. or
- at least 5 mm in height, where food is in an assisted service refrigerated display cabinet.



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## Fruit and vegetables identified with individual stickers

Some fruit and vegetables may already carry an individual sticker indicating the country of origin of the food. These foods would therefore meet this Standard. This is often the case with fruit such as apples, oranges and lemons. However, some stickers simply give a brand name and do not identify the country of origin of the food. These would need a compliant country of origin label in connection with the display. Any additional country of origin information must be consistent with the information on the individual stickers.

## Locating Country of Origin information

Usually the retailer will find country of origin information on the invoice, carton or package the product was supplied in. If this information cannot be located, the supplier should be asked to provide it. Suppliers are obliged to provide country of origin information.

## Words or phrases allowed in labels

Words and phrases that describe the country of origin of food are also

subject to Australian Consumer Law. The requirements of the Food Standards Code should be read in conjunction with the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* which is enforced by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). Australian Consumer Law sets out criteria for businesses to follow when representations are made – such as ‘product of’, ‘made in’, or claims that goods, ingredients or components are ‘grown in’ a particular country. Retailers can obtain further information about the Australian Consumer Law by visiting the ACCC website at [www.accc.com.au](http://www.accc.com.au)

## False or misleading claims

In NSW it is an offence to label or advertise food in a manner that is likely to mislead or deceive customers about the country of origin of the food. The Food Authority considers misleading or deceptive conduct and false descriptions of food to be serious offences. Such offences can include claiming that food is a mix of local and imported foods when in fact it contains *only* local or only imported food, and the use of logos, pictures or maps that are likely to mislead or deceive the consumer in relation to the true country of origin of

the food. False or misleading representations about the country of origin of foods are also regulated under the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

## More information

- visit the Food Authority’s website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406
- visit the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) website at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



Department of  
Primary Industries  
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6 Avenue of the Americas, Newington NSW 2127  
PO Box 6682, Silverwater NSW 1811  
T 1300 552 406  
[contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)  
ABN 47 080 404 416

More resources at [foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)



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