

Alcoholic beverage labelling

Food Act 2006

This fact sheet outlines the requirements for importers and retailers under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) regarding the labelling of packaged alcoholic beverages.

Compliance with the Code

Importers and retail food businesses must not sell food that does not comply with the labelling requirements of the Code. If a product imported into or produced in Queensland does not contain all the required information, this can be rectified by applying a label containing the missing information to each individual product. Note that it is an offence to alter, remove, erase, obliterate or obscure information that is prescribed by the Code to be on a label, unless authorised by Queensland Health (Standard 1.2.1-22).

Queensland Health Public Health Units are responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of food labelling requirements. Significant penalties apply for non-compliance with the Code.

What is required under the Code

It is important that all food businesses, including importers and retailers, are familiar with the requirements of the Code. Chapter 1 of the Code contains the labelling provisions and information that must be provided for foods, and the requirements for how this information must be presented. Standard 2.7 imposes additional labelling and information requirements specific to alcoholic products. The main requirements and reference to the relevant Standard in the Code include –

- the name/description of the product (Standard 1.2.2-2)
- the supplier/importer's name and business address in Australia or New Zealand (Standard 1.2.2-4)
- lot identification details (Standard 1.2.2-3)
- a declaration of allergens e.g. added sulphites, egg or distilled from wheat (Standard 1.2.3-4)
- the 'best-before' date, for products with a shelf life of less than 2 years (Standard 1.2.5-3)
- the approximate number of standard drinks in the package (Standard 2.7.1-4)
- a statement of the alcohol content of the beverage (Standard 2.7.1-3)
- a pregnancy warning label (Standard 2.7.1 Division 4).

Note: There are other labelling requirements which have not been included here. For further information, refer to Standard 2.7 of the Code.

Parallel importation

Parallel importation is when a product manufactured for sale in a foreign market is imported into Australia without authorisation from the manufacturer, and is sold alongside a similar product that has been specifically manufactured for the Australian market. For example, the appearance of parallel beer imports on the Australian market has been associated with non-compliance with certain labelling requirements of the Code, including the absence of the importer's name and business address in Australia or New Zealand and the number of standard drinks in the package. Information on selling parallel imports is also available from the ACCC at www.accc.gov.au/business/treating-customers-fairly/selling-parallel-imports.

Licensing requirements

Under the *Food Act 2006* a food license may be required to manufacture (e.g. brew, bottle) alcoholic beverages. Application is to be made with the local government for the area where the manufacturing business is located. For sale of alcoholic beverages that contain 0.5% or higher alcohol by volume, a liquor licence may be required from the [Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation](#).

Pregnancy warning labelling

On 31 July 2020, the Code was amended to include the requirement for pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages (Standard 2.7.1). Businesses have a three-year transition period to implement the requirements. Recognising that alcoholic beverages may have a slow market turnover or may be intended for ageing/cellaring before sale, alcoholic beverages packaged and labelled before the end of the transition period are exempt from the requirement. Standard 1.1.1-9 of the Code will not apply.

Country of origin labelling

Packaged alcoholic beverages are also subject to the Australian Consumer Law's country of origin food labelling requirements, administered by the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC). Information about country of origin labelling requirements are available from the ACCC website at www.accc.gov.au/cool.

Restriction on use of geographical indications

A geographical indication means an indication that identifies a product as originating in a particular country, locality or region; and where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the product is essentially attributable to its origin. For example, a whisky only produced in Scotland, in accordance with United Kingdom laws, can be labelled 'Scotch Whisky'.

Standard 2.7.5-4 prohibits a geographical indication being used for a spirit unless the spirit has been **produced** in the country, locality or region indicated. The Standard also prohibits a

spirit being sold under a geographical indication where the spirit is lawfully exported under the geographical indication from the indicated country, locality or region but bottled in another country, locality or region. This prohibition does not apply if the alcohol by volume concentration for the spirit is at a level permitted under the applicable laws for that geographical indication.

Geographical indications are also recognised as intellectual property and therefore apply to many other food products, including wine. More information is available at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/organisations/wto/intellectual-property/Pages/ip-geographical-indications>.

Further information

Further information on the labelling requirements for food can be found in the Queensland Health Label Buster guide located in information sets and resources at www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/industry-environment/food-safety.

More detailed information is available from the Code, which can be accessed on the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) website www.foodstandards.gov.au.

If you have a concern about the labelling or composition of an alcoholic beverage, contact your local Queensland Health Public Health Unit. Contact details for Public Health Units can be found at www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units.