

Labelling of Honey

To facilitate trade based on fair competition and to prevent both traders and consumers from being misled general food labelling as well as specific labelling legislation applies to honey.

Council Directive 2001/110/EC (as amended) relating to honey (S.I. 367 of 2003 as amended), Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers (S.I. 556 of 2014) and Directive 2011/91/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on indications or marks identifying the lot to which a foodstuff belongs (S.I. 110 of 1992) set out the labelling requirements under European Union and Irish law for jarred honey offered for sale.

This leaflet has been designed to summarise these requirements to assist and guide those preparing honey for the market. The official legal text will take precedence in the event of any dispute between the requirements set out in this guide and the official legal text.

In designing a label for honey the following points should be considered to comply with legislative requirements:

- Purchaser must not be misled and there must be no medicinal claim.
- The information must be easy to understand, clearly legible, easily visible and indelible (won't rub out or wash off the label).
- Name of the food (honey) and net quantity must be in the same field of vision.
- Label must be at least in English.
- Product name must be stated; no food ingredient, additive, or anything other than honey may be added to product sold as honey. Honey may be labelled and sold as "Honey" or if desired as one of the following sub-types (as appropriate):
 - Blossom or Nectar Honey
 - Honeydew Honey
 - Drained Honey (honey obtained by draining decapped broodless combs)
 - Extracted Honey (obtained by centrifuging decapped broodless combs)
 - Pressed Honey (obtained by pressing broodless combs with or without the application of moderate heat not exceeding 45°C)

Other types of honey that must be labelled as such are:

- Comb Honey (includes cut comb honey)
- Chunk Honey or cut comb in honey (honey containing one or more pieces of comb honey)
- Filtered Honey (honey obtained by removing foreign organic or inorganic matter in such a way as to result in significant removal of pollen)
- Baker's Honey (honey that is only suitable for industrial use or as an ingredient in other foodstuffs. It may have a foreign taste or odour and/or have begun to ferment or have fermented and/or have been over heated.) In the case of Baker's Honey the words "**Intended for Cooking Only**" must appear in close proximity to the product name.

- Except in the case of Filtered Honey or Baker's Honey, the product name may be supplemented by information referring to:
 - Floral or vegetable origin if the product comes wholly or mainly from the indicated source and possesses the organoleptic, physico-chemical and microscopic characteristics of that source and /or information referring to:
 - Regional, territorial or topographical origin, if the product comes from the indicated source.
- Net quantity must be stated in grams (g) or kilograms (kg) as appropriate.
- The country or countries of origin where the honey has been harvested must be stated. If the honey originated in more than one country the following may be used (as appropriate):
 - “blend of EU honeys”
 - “blend of non-EU honeys”
 - “blend of EU and non-EU honeys”
- As a single ingredient unprocessed food, honey does not require to be labelled with a nutritional declaration. If a nutrition declaration is provided on honey it must be accurate and presented together in a clear format using the correct units of measurement as well as the correct order of presentation (all as set out in Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011).
- The date of minimum durability, which must be preceded by the words "best before end..." unless the date includes an indication of this. The date of minimum durability of a food is defined as the date until which the food retains its specific properties if properly stored. Honey should retain its specific properties for a number of years if correctly stored, therefore it's up to the beekeeper/honey packer to determine what a suitable shelf life for their product should be taking into account the nature of the product.
- Unless the best before date is stated as a specific date, the Lot Number must be stated and should be preceded by the letter "L" so it's clearly distinguishable as such. Lot means batch of sales units of a foodstuff, produced, manufactured or packaged under practically the same conditions. For beekeepers with more than one apiary it is suggested a different Lot Number should be allocated to honey from each apiary or each blend from different apiaries. The Lot Number may be written on the label by hand.
- The label must state the name/business name and address of the producer/packer or if appropriate the company for which the honey was packed for established within the EU. The name and address must be sufficiently detailed to allow the individual / business involved to be contacted by post.

For guidance purposes copies of the legislation relating to the labelling of honey are available on the Department's website at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/beekeepinghoney/>

If necessary please update your procedures to ensure that honey you offer for sale complies with the labelling requirements.

If you require any advice or clarification in relation to this issue please:

Email: Beekeeping@agriculture.gov.ie **or Phone:** 01 505 8804 / 01 505 8785