

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Trader Notice MH 2/2017
To: All Food Business Operators
Subject: Identification marking on packaging of cut meat and offal

This Trader Notice includes the detail of TN 16/2015 on multiple identification marking on packaging of cut meat and offal. In addition, it clarifies the application and positioning of the identification mark on the packaging of cut meat and offal, so that the identification mark is destroyed on opening the packaging.

Background

The application of different identification numbers to the outer packaging has been a recognised practice in the dairy sector for some time and one that has been accepted by the Commission.

Member States have raised the issue of the use of multiple identification/health markings. In accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, products of animal origin may be placed on the market only if they bear a health mark or an identification mark, as appropriate. It has come to light in the recent past that similar practices (application of different identification numbers) are also taking place within other commodity sectors. Historically such practices were deemed to be not in accordance with EU Regulations.

In relation to the application and positioning of the identification marking on cut meat and offal packaging, the identification marking must be applied to a label fixed to the packaging or printed on the packaging, in such a way that it is destroyed when the packaging is opened, as required by Annex II, Section I, Part C10 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Update on multiple identification health marking

The European Commission's Directorate General for Health & Food Safety (DG SANTE) advise that other additional identification markings should be avoided as much as possible but such practice is not prohibited by EU legislation, provided that they do not replace the identification mark required by EU legislation. The last establishment where the food has been produced or handled must therefore be clearly indicated.

Role of plant management

Should FBOs decide to place more than one identification number on the outer packaging of products produced in their establishments then the following should be noted:

To maintain the integrity of traceability in line with Regulation 178/2002, each FBO that uses more than one oval mark must include in their HACCP plans the means by which the last establishment where the food has been produced or handled is clearly indicated.

Please note that this clarification is without prejudice to the exclusive competence of the Court of Justice of the European Union to provide authoritative interpretation of EU law.

The FBO should ensure that identification marking on cut meat and offal packaging should be applied to a label fixed to the packaging, or printed on the packaging in such a way that the identification mark is destroyed when the packaging is opened. This is not necessary, however, if the process of opening destroys the packaging. When wrapping provides the same protection as packaging, the label may be affixed to the wrapping.