

Business Factsheet

Labelling of Genetically Modified (GM) Foods A Guide For Caterers

This leaflet provides information about the labelling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), as required by the Genetically Modified Food (England) Regulations 2004.

Who does this leaflet affect?

These new rules apply to meals sold at restaurants and other catering establishments, and to food that is sold loose or is packed on the premises where it is sold.

Which law requires this labelling?

The labelling is required by EC regulation 1829/2003. This regulation is mainly enforced by Trading Standards under the Genetically Modified Food (England) Regulations 2004, however, Environmental Health may carry out enforcement in certain local authorities.

What is required?

Food retailers and caterers have to inform their customers which foods and ingredients, if any, contain or are produced from genetically modified organisms.

This does not include pre-packed foods, which are sold to consumers in the same container that the manufacturer packed them in.

What is GM food?

Genetically modified food is produced from plants which have had their genetic make-up tweaked in the lab. Scientists "cut and paste" a gene from another organism into a plant's DNA to give it a new characteristic. Genetic modification (GM) can be used to give crops immunity to plant viruses.

Which foods might be GM?

There are several GM organisms authorised for use in food. These organisms include soya, maize, rapeseed, and cotton, which are sometimes used as ingredients in vegetable oil.

It's worth noting that GM foods appear to be widely available to caterers in the form of cooking oil and other products, such as mayonnaise.

Future authorisations may be granted for other GM organisms, therefore you should always check for any changes in the ingredients of the products you are supplied.

How do these rules apply to caterers?

There are currently no detailed rules about how this information should be provided in a catering establishment. However, the principle is that the consumer must be able to identify each food, which contains GM ingredients. There are plenty of foods such as cooking oils available that don't use GM ingredients, and caterers are, of course, free to choose ones with or without GM ingredients, however, if you do choose to use a food with GM ingredients this information must be passed on to your customers.

Each food item, which contains GM ingredients, should be clearly identified on each menu (including takeaway menus, and temporary or 'specials' menus such as chalk boards). This could be done by the use of an appropriate symbol e.g. 'GM' next to each item containing GM ingredients, and a clear explanation of the symbol at the bottom of the menu. Many caterers already use similar systems to identify vegetarian dishes e.g. 'V' symbol, and dishes containing allergens such as nuts e.g. 'N' symbol.

A general notice that foods contain, or may contain, GM ingredients, is no longer sufficient (such notices used to be permitted under previous regulations).

The following examples would be acceptable:

<p>Starters</p> <p>Prawn cocktail £3.95 (mayonnaise contains vegetable oil produced from genetically modified soya)</p> <p>Soup of the day £2.95</p> <p>Mains</p> <p>Scampi & Chips £6.95 (cooked in vegetable oil produced from genetically modified soya)</p> <p>Sausage Egg & Chips £5.95 (cooked in vegetable oil produced from genetically modified soya)</p> <p>Chicken pie, new potatoes and peas £6.95</p>
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<p>Starters</p> <p>Prawn cocktail _{GM} £3.95</p> <p>Tomato soup _v £2.95</p> <p>Mains</p> <p>Scampi & Chips _{GM} £6.95</p> <p>Sausage Egg & Chips _{GM} £5.95</p> <p>Chicken pie, new potatoes and peas £6.95</p> <p>GM: contains vegetable oil produced from genetically modified soya</p> <p>V: vegetarian</p>
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How do I find out which foods contain genetically modified organisms?

Your supplier should pass on this information to you. It is now a legal requirement for food products produced from or containing ingredients produced from GMOs (e.g. soya) to be declared either in the ingredients list or if there is no ingredients list clearly on the label.

What information is required on food from your suppliers?

Where there is an ingredients list, any GM ingredient must be identified by the use of the words 'genetically modified' or 'produced from genetically modified (name of the ingredient)'. These words must be printed in brackets after the name of the ingredient or as a footnote to the list of ingredients.

<p>Ingredients: Potatoes, soya oil*, salt, flavouring. *Genetically modified</p>

<p>Ingredients: Vegetable oil (produced from genetically modified soya), Anti-foaming agent E900.</p>
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Coleslaw

69p per 100g

Contains Vegetable oil
(produced from
genetically modified soya)

If there is no list of ingredients, the words 'genetically modified' or 'produced from genetically modified (name of organism)' must appear on the label.

Where there is no label (for example because the food is sold loose, or because it is sold in a catering establishment), the same information must be displayed either on the food display or immediately next to it in a font sufficiently large for it to be easily identified and read.

Are there any exemptions?

The labelling requirement applies to all foods, which are supplied to the final consumer or to a catering establishment.

If GM foods are accidentally or unavoidably present in a food at low levels (no more than 0.9%), they need not be declared. In this case, the producer will be expected to show that they have taken appropriate steps to avoid the presence of GM food.

Can I use the term GM free?

Products consistently 100% free from GM material can be labelled as such but its use is discouraged.

Remember:

- Analytically, it is possible to detect minute traces of genetically modified organisms in food.
- Additives, flavourings and extraction solvents you use may have been produced from genetically modified organisms.

What are the consequences of non-compliance?

Failure to comply with these labelling requirements is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty on summary conviction in a magistrates' court is a fine of £5,000

This advice is designed to provide basic guidance to traders. It is not a complete or authoritative statement of the law. For further advice or assistance on this or any other Trading Standards legislation, please contact your nearest office.

We will be pleased to offer this information in larger print or translated into any language on request.

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