

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR TRADERS THE MEAT PRODUCT REGULATIONS 2003

What do these Regulations cover?

These Regulations replace the Meat Products & Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984. They define meat for inclusion in meat products (such as sausages, burgers and pies), state how such products should be labelled and detail compositional requirements for reserved description products.

What is the Definition of Meat?

Under the new European definition of meat only skeletal muscle (including diaphragm and masseters) is regarded as meat for inclusion in meat products. The following are not now defined as meat and will have to be separately declared:

- Heart, tongue, head muscles (other than masseters), muscles of the carpus, tarsus & tail.
- Offals such as liver, kidney & pancreas.
- Mechanically recovered meat (MRM).

There are also strict limits on the amount of fat and connective tissue, which can be associated with meat. These are shown in the following table:

	Pork	Birds & Rabbits	Beef, Lamb and Other
Fat	30%	15%	25%
Connective Tissue	25%	10%	25%

Any fat or connective tissue in excess of these limits will not count towards the meat content of meat products and will also have to be declared on the ingredient list on pre-packed meat products.

How will labelling be affected?

There is no longer any requirement to declare a minimum percentage meat content. Instead, all meat products, both loose and pre-packed, will have to carry a Quantitative Ingredient Declaration (QUID Declaration) in respect of their meat content.

This is a statement of the actual percentage of each type of meat against the total of the ingredients put into the product during production.

Meat products sold pre-packed are caught by the general labelling requirement of the Food Labelling Regulations 1996. As such, they will need to have a QUID declaration for the meat content and also declare, as ingredients, any excess fat and connective tissue.

Meat Products sold **loose only** need to carry a QUID declaration for the meat present. Non-meat ingredients and excess fat and connective tissue do not need to be declared.

Are there any exemptions?

The following are exempt:

- Raw meat.
- Any product containing the fat, but no other meat, of any animal or bird.
- Poultry meat falling within EC Regulation 1906/90

- No QUID declaration will be required for meat products sold from a catering establishment (e.g., restaurant, pubs etc).
- No QUID declaration will be required for sandwiches, filled rolls, pizzas and similar products that contain meat products. *
- No QUID declaration will be required for soups, broths or gravies that contain meat products. *

*Non pre-packed and pre-packed for direct sale.

What are the compositional requirements for reserved description products?

Compositional Requirements for specific products such as sausages, burgers, meat pies etc., are given in the appendix to this fact sheet.

Pastes, patés and spreads no longer have reserved descriptions and specified percentage meat contents.

Are there any other requirements?

Additional labelling requirements are detailed for meat products that have the appearance of a cut, joint, slice, etc.

The name of such food should include:

- Added ingredients of animal origin if it is from a different species.
- Other added ingredients, except
 - (a) Additives
 - (b) Curing Salts
 - (c) Salt/herb/spice seasoning
 - (d) Protein added for a technological purpose
 - (e) sugar added for taste
- Added water above 5% of the weight of the product (meat and cooked cured meat).
- Added water above 10% of the weight of the product (uncooked cured meat)

When do the changes happen?

The Meat Products Regulations came into force on 2nd September 2003. There is a transition period until **1st Feb 2004** to allow manufacturers and producers to change to the new compositional requirements.

However the new meat definition and the QUID labelling requirements must now be followed.

How will the requirements be enforced?

Local authorities through their Trading Standards or Environmental Health Officers will advise on the requirements.

Random inspection visits will also be made to check that the required information is being labelled correctly.

What happens if the labelling is not correct?

Failure to comply with the labelling requirements could result in a fine of up to £5000, for each contravention. 4

What further guidance is available?

For specific information and assistance, please contact:

The Food Standards Agency has published guidance notes on the Meat Product Regulations 2003 at –

www.foodstandards.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/

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