

Beyond Best Before

Dear FWD member

During the Covid-19 crisis many members are concerned about stock on hand with short Best Before End dates. Suppliers have similar concerns and in some instances are offering product supply with reduced BBEs.

FWD recently forwarded links to some refreshed guidance from WRAP on BBE dates. These guidelines are endorsed by the Food Standards Agency and DEFRA, and provide assurance for wholesalers, customers and consumers that it is safe and acceptable to sell and consume products which are past BBE.

To ensure both wholesalers and customers can benefit from these guidelines, the attached one page pdf is designed for you to include with deliveries or on your customer communications. Two label options are available which allow a sticker on the pack to also communicate the BBE guidance.

These actions are also endorsed by Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards as part of a dedicated primary authority scheme. You are covered by this Primary Authority scheme through your membership of the FWD. This means that if you adopt this policy in your business, then it must be respected by all other local authorities and they cannot ask you to adopt a different policy. They offer the following guidance:

“Foods marked with best-before or best-before-end dates may be sold after their marked dates, provided that they remain of good quality and are fit for human consumption. In these circumstances it is advisable to ensure that customers know that the date has expired before they make the decision to buy. The manufacturer is responsible for the quality of the product until the stated best-before/best-before-end date; if the retailer chooses sell the product after the stated date, they must then take responsibility for the quality of the product.

“We suggest price reductions as a way of ensuring out of date food is sold through quickly and consumers are aware that the quality of the product may not be as good as they would normally expect. There is no requirement to reduce the price of goods, though selling out of date stock off at the normal price without highlighting the date to customers is likely to upset customers and cause reputational damage. The same applies to B2B sales.”

Each member can choose to use the support materials as appropriate. Widespread adoption is likely to result in less food waste and the least commercially negative impact. Those members who do adopt the guidelines should communicate this to their suppliers as well as customers.



James Bielby
Chief Executive FWD

Beyond Best Before End Guidance

This guidance is supported by the Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD) and endorsed by the FWD Primary Authority, on the sale of food approaching or past its Best Before date. The durations beyond Best Before for different product types have been drawn from the published produced by WRAP updated April 2020, in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (https://wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Surplus_food_redistribution_labelling_guide.pdf)

The WRAP document seeks to minimise the waste of good food by providing guidance on determining whether products are fit to eat after their 'Best Before' date. All food businesses are urged to implement this guidance wherever possible.

The 'Best Before' date relates to food quality. Food with a 'Best Before' date can be sold, and consumed after this date. Providing food is stored in appropriate conditions – i.e. as instructed on the label by the manufacturer – and has not become otherwise contaminated, it will be safe to consume for a period of time after the 'Best Before' date has passed, but it may not be at its best.

Guidance for Specific Product Types

(extract from WRAP publication)

Category	Labelling	Duration		
 Ambient	Ambient includes a wide range of food that is found in cans, jars and packets. Typically such food carries a 'Best Before End' date and a long shelf life.	There are many examples of organisations selling ambient items for a long period after the 'Best Before' date has passed. <i>*There are a number of factors which can have an effect on the quality of soft drinks beyond their Best Before date, including the pack type and ingredients. Therefore, each product should be considered individually in determining the most appropriate timeframe. Where this is not possible, the following timeframes provide a guide: AWAITING FINAL SIGN OFF BSDA 20.5.20</i>		
	Pack Type	Product	Extended life beyond 'Best Before'	Additional checks prior to sale
	Packet	Crisps	1 month	Visual check: confirm absence of staleness; confirm pack integrity maintained.
	Packet	Cake	3 months	Visual check: confirm pack integrity maintained.
	Packet	Biscuits/Cereals	6 months	Visual check: confirm pack integrity.
	Packet	Dried pasta and pulses	3 years	Visual check: confirm pack integrity.
	Canned foods	Soup/Beans/Fish/Meat/etc.	3 years	Visual check: confirm pack integrity is maintained and can is free from dents.
	Foil pack	Dry pasta/Soup mix/etc.	3 years	Visual check: confirm pack integrity.
	Jars	Jams/Condiments/Sauces	3 years	Visual check: confirm integrity of seal and jars free from damage.
	*Soft Drinks	All Soft Drinks	1 month	<i>1 month for all ambient soft drinks (regardless of pack type); except 3 months for all full-sugar drinks and water in non-permeable packs (e.g. glass, cans & pouches)</i>
	Full Sugar Drinks	3 months		
 Frozen	On the packaging of frozen food there is an indicative guide stating how long the food can be stored using freezers of a given star rating, for optimal quality. The products are usually labelled 'Best Before End'.	If items have been stored frozen at the FBO in accordance with regulations, they will be safe to eat for months after the 'Best Before End' date. In some cases (for example frozen pork cuts, minced pork products, pizzas with ham and pepperoni, kippers and mackerel) it would be advisable to confirm any potential to donate food after the 'Best Before End' date with the manufacturer (as these products are more likely to be affected by changes in taste even when frozen). The star-rating storage life reflects the length of time the product is likely to remain in good condition. Eventually, even well-frozen food will deteriorate and become unpalatable, whilst still remaining safe to eat. For further information https://wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Food_labelling_guidance.pdf		