

Foodsafety BYTES

Number: 10

Food date labelling II

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The food safety risk

There are many factors to consider when it comes to defining the shelf life of food.

For example, the push to reduce food waste demands longer shelf life but consumers want fresher foods and may see a longer shelf life as less fresh.

However, the decision must always be one of food safety.

There are some products that do not have to display a date mark, these include:

- Fresh fruit.
- Fresh vegetables.
- Wines obtained from grapes or grape musts.
- Beverages containing 10% or more by volume of alcohol.
- Pasties/baked products that are consumed within 24 hours of their manufacture.
- Vinegar.
- Cooking salt.
- Solid sugar.
- Confectionery products consisting solely of flavoured and/or coloured sugars.
- Chewing gums.

These foods are considered safe. This can be because of their ability to resist microbial growth due to certain physical attributes, such as low pH or low water activity, a naturally short shelf life or maybe just the fact that spoilage is noticeable and not a safety issue.

With this in mind, food producers may need help in defining good, safe date marks that optimise shelf-life, so that foods are economical to produce and less likely to become waste.

The number one priority must always be to have date marks that ensure the safety of the product for consumers.