Labelling of foodstuffs in Europe

BEUC's [European Consumers' Organisation] position and proposals

By Sylvie Pradelle
UFC Que Choisir
France

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European labelling: significant progress

Compulsory	Not always (wines, cheeses, etc.)
Standardised	Not enough (size of the characters)
Exhaustive	Some omissions (storage after opening)
But …	Not read enough (*) Poorly understood (*) (…) _

European labelling: significant progress

Progress …

…in need of urgent perfection! _

Insufficiently used labelling

BEUC study (April 2005):

- 5 countries: Germany, Denmark, Spain, Hungary and Poland

- 3,000 people _

Insufficiently used labelling

- 62% rarely or never read the list of ingredients

- 63% rarely or never read the nutritional analysis _

- Why is there this under-use?

Two answers:

- **Directive 2000/13 has not been applied!**
- **Directive 2000/13 is insufficient!**

Some leads …

BEUC study:

- Difficulty in **finding** the list of ingredients **60%**
- Difficulty in **understanding** the list of ingredients **70%**
- Would like to see the **size of the characters** increased **2/3 _**

- Difficulties in finding the information
- Problems with legibility
- Comprehension problems
- Some consumers do not think that some of the information applies to them!

(…)

Let's look at each of these issues in more detail…_

Finding the information … (1/2)

Directive 2000/13 - Article 13:

"The particulars (...) shall be (...) marked in a conspicuous place in such as way as to be ***easily visible*** *(...)"*

Reminder of the results of the BEUC study:

60% Difficulty in **finding** the list of ingredients

Finding the information … (2/2)

- Information is rarely on the same side
- Together with non-regulatory information
- Sometimes lost among all the other languages

Conclusion:

In practice, the information is not ***"easily visible".***

Define legibility (1/2)

- Directive 2000/13 - Article 13

  "The particulars (...) shall be (...) marked (...) in such a way as to be (...) clearly ***legible*** *(...)"*

- The industry's voluntary guidelines (e.g. the ANIA [French association of food industries] brochure)

- However: 2/3 of consumers would like larger letters!

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Define legibility (2/2)

- Imprinted information …
- … tiny
- … no contrast in colour

Conclusion:

Is this information that is

"clearly legible"?

Understanding the information (1/2)

Directive 2000/13 - Article 13

"The particulars ... shall be easy to ***understand*** *..."*

Reminder of the results of the BEUC study:

70% Difficulty in **understanding** the list of ingredients

Understanding the information (2/2)

Some examples:

- Additives: E330 = Citric acid
- Calcium caseinate = Milk proteins

Conclusion:

Can this information be made

"easy to understand"?

Allergens: standardisation of warnings

Large number of products and of categories of food products

Large number of allergens cited (max 6)

Very diverse methods:

- "May contain …"
- "Made in a factory processing ..."
- "Traces…", "Possible traces …"
- Just a few words after the ingredients

Despite everything ….

… consumers want to see improvements

- 2/3 are for an improvement in the list of ingredients
- 77% are for an improvement in the nutritional labelling

BEUC's position

- Placement of information ⇒Putting the main information in a box in a specific place
- Legibility ⇒ Printed in black and white, in the minimum size for the size of packaging
- Understanding ⇒ Simpler terms _

BEUC's position

- Allergens:
  Compulsory HACCP vs. warning labels
- Other methods do not replace labelling
- Regulatory vs. voluntary
- A simplified and unique nutritional labelling _