



Ministry of Economic Affairs



Date Marking and Food Waste

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History - I

- Since 2009 the Dutch government stimulates the reduction of food waste (as part of policy on sustainable food).
- In 2011 research on 'perceived barriers in laws and regulations' regarding food waste (Wageningen UR).
- The research showed that:
 - there are hardly any legal barriers, but...
 - ...many rules are experienced as a barrier.



History - II

Three causes of barriers regarding expiry dates:

1. Lack of clarity on the meaning of expiry dates
2. Short expiry dates for non-perishable and very long shelf life products
3. Product liability for retail companies causes a tighter 'best before' date than the actual shelf life of a product



Start of a more detailed study on expiry dates



Study 'Expiry date: a waste of time?' - *Aim*

1. To investigate the possibility to reduce food waste under *current* legislation on expiry dates.
2. To indicate the use of expiry dates in practice and consequences for food waste.



Study 'Expiry date: a waste of time?' - *Conclusions*

1. As a result of (new) EU legislation Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011) only a *minimum durability date* or a *use-by date*.
2. Longer expiry dates causes probably less waste (see recent WRAP study + TIFN (to be published)).
3. Manufacturers and retailers use different date types for similar products.
4. 15% of consumers waste is due to passing expiry date, 10% fresh products, 5% long shelf life products.
5. Abolish expiry dates for long-life products is not feasible or not worthwhile, due to legislation or potential.
6. Communication for consumers on expiry dates is broadly consistent.



Follow up – *Different actions are initiated*

1. Leaflet for companies explaining new rules on expiry dates.
2. Seminar for companies to stimulate a uniform use of expiry dates (i.e. do not use the 'use by date' as a marketing tool to give a product a fresher image).
3. The EC was asked for extension of the list of products which require no date (Annex A of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011).
4. Information through Dutch Nutrition Center on meaning of expiry dates. (<http://www.voedingscentrum.nl/encyclopedie/houdbaarheidsdatum-tht-tgt-.aspx>).
5. Stimulate producers to give consumers information on the shelf life of products.



Initiative of the Dutch dairy industry: pictogram on milk packages



Why extension of Annex A of Regulation 1169?

- Although little effect is to be expected, it is still an effect and an important signal to the society.
- In % the effect will be small, but in tonnage the effect might be large.
- There is already a list, why not extent it with more, similar products.
(better regulation)
- Will sort effect in the whole chain, not only with consumers but also with producers and retailers. *(keep product longer in stock)*
- We expect that products with no date will be more donated to foodbanks. *(because the date cannot be passed)*

 **food will be used as food!**



Are we ready?

- No! It's an ongoing discussion in the Netherlands
- We are intending to do a study on terminology; will another translation of 'best before' be better understood?
- Recent study -> shelf life information in barcodes?
- Different ongoing studies regarding expiry dates and food supply chain.
- Risk assessment advice regarding criteria which could be used for extending Annex X
- Still trying stimulate industry to uniform the use of best before date for similar products.
- ...



Thank you for your attention

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