



Food redistribution in the EU: translation of
Dutch Information Sheet
Charitable institutions and organisations

 **Saving Food Together**

DISCLAIMER

This document constitutes an English translation of the “Informatieblad 76 - Charitatieve instellingen en organisaties” of the Netherlands, originally drafted, published and authenticated in Dutch. For legal purposes, only the authentic Dutch text of the “Information Sheet 76 - Charitable institutions and organisations” shall be used. Whilst every effort was made to provide accurate information, the European Commission cannot take responsibility for any errors.



INFORMATION SHEET

Title Charitable institutions and organisations
Number 76
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1. Aim

This information sheet includes guidelines for understanding food safety, and explicitly includes topics such as shelf life data, traceability, labelling and freezing foodstuffs.

This information sheet replaces the previous version of "Charitable institutions and organisations", dated April 2015.

2. Scope

This information sheet applies to all foodstuffs that are distributed by charitable institutions and organisations.

3. Legislation

Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 includes rules and general principles on food safety. The Regulation states that harmful and unfit foodstuffs may no longer be offered for consumption and stipulates the measures to be taken to ensure traceability requirements are properly fulfilled. Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 sets out rules aimed at the organisation, hygiene, cold chain and assurance of food safety. Regulation (EC) No 1169/2011 sets out rules regarding labelling, allergens and the use of shelf life data.

4. Definitions

Charitable institution (e.g. food bank): an institution that collects foodstuffs to distribute to others. The foodstuffs may be distributed directly to persons in need as part of a scheme aimed at providing food aid and combating poverty. The institution can also act as an assembly point where distribution to share out points is organised.

Charitable institution share out points: such premises may be used to store foodstuffs, or only to distribute foodstuffs to persons in need as part of a scheme aimed at providing food aid and combating poverty.

Charitable organisation: a non-profit organisation of a humanitarian nature that distributes foodstuffs to persons in need as part of a scheme aimed at providing food aid and combating poverty. This also includes charity restaurants, charity food shops, sheltered workshops, etc.

Use by date: the use by date (meaning up until and including that date) refers to the safety of the product and is displayed on highly perishable food. This applies to foodstuffs that, after a short period, constitute an immediate danger to public health. In addition to a date, instructions for storage and use will always have been added. After this date such products may no longer be offered, and may therefore no longer be distributed. This is necessary because of the potential health risks for the consumer.

Best before date: the best before date (meaning up until and including that date) applied to perishable foodstuffs refers to the microbiological safety of the product and when applied to non-perishable foodstuffs it relates primarily to quality, where risks to the health of consumers are less likely to appear. The package also includes advice on storage, which should be observed. The cold chain must remain unbroken.

The manufacturer ensures the safety and quality up to and including the stated date. Afterwards, this quality guarantee is no longer applicable, but that does not always immediately pose a danger to public health. This applies to non-perishable food in particular.

5. Food distribution

a) General

- Do not accept unfit or unsafe foodstuffs from suppliers.
- Set up agreements with suppliers on food safety aspects: quality, reason for delivery, best before dates, storage conditions and the cold chain (e.g. who is responsible for refrigerated transport?).
- Do not change use by or best before dates yourself.
- If foodstuffs are transported and stored in the right conditions, the manufacturer remains responsible for their quality until their use by or best before date.
- Employees working with the foodstuffs should be informed of the risks and the instructions for limiting these risks.
- Keep a record of the relevant agreements with suppliers, goods received, checks carried out and corrective measures.

b) Guidelines for shelf life data

Foodstuffs with a use by date may NOT be supplied to the consumer after that date.

Foodstuffs that have passed their best before date can, in some cases, still be distributed to consumers without any risk to public health, but the institution/organisation is then responsible for the quality and safety. The quality of these foodstuffs must therefore be thoroughly checked.

A non-restrictive list of foodstuffs that can be used by charitable institutions and organisations is provided in the annex. This list can be used as a guideline for assessing how to preserve foodstuffs once they have reached or passed their best before date.

The listed foodstuffs are divided into four categories, ranging from foodstuffs with a very long shelf life, to those with a short shelf life. The last column

contains an estimate of the time window within which the foodstuff remains fit for distribution once it has exceeded its best before date. However, the time window is purely indicative and a case-by-case assessment is always required, possibly in consultation with the supplier.

When in doubt, opt for the safe option and stop distribution.

It is essential that the storage conditions and cold chain be respected.

Furthermore, the packaging must be intact.

c) Storage temperature guidelines

- Perishable foodstuffs must be stored at the recommended temperature - see packaging. If there is no recommended temperature, then the following applies: below 7°C. Deep-frozen and frozen foodstuffs are stored at -18°C or below and the temperature during transportation may temporarily rise to -15°C. For local distribution, the temperature may temporarily rise to -12°C.
- Ensure the cool chain remains unbroken. Only add perishable foodstuffs to the food packages at the last minute. Remember to take the ambient temperature into account (if needed, take extra measures on warm days). Inform the consumer if the food package contains perishable foodstuffs.

d) Labelling guidelines

Everyone is entitled to comprehensive information on the foodstuffs he/she consumes. Failure to provide the relevant information, for example concerning allergens, can be genuinely dangerous for sensitive individuals. In the case of pre-packaged foodstuffs, all information must be provided on the label or on an inserted document. If non pre-packaged foodstuffs are being supplied, the employees must be able to provide information if requested.

Contact the supplier for this, as they should be able to provide the information when supplying the foodstuffs. Make an agreement about this.

e) Freezing guidelines

Freezing of pre-packed foods such as fresh meat and chicken is permitted, provided that:

- the foodstuffs are frozen no later than the indicated shelf life date (use by or best before date);
- the foodstuffs still bear their characteristic qualities and do not show any defects;
- freezing takes place in the appropriate installation (e.g. a freezer) with sufficient capacity;
- the freezing process is completed sufficiently quickly, for example by freezing the foodstuffs separately;
- the date of freezing is marked on the packaging and;
- the sentence "to be consumed immediately after defrosting" is included on the packaging.

Needless to say that the cold chain should be observed at all times, during storage as well as during transportation and distribution.

Freezing can also take place at the supplier, after which the frozen foodstuffs are delivered to the charitable institution or organisation. The abovementioned requirements also apply for the supplier.

f) Traceability guidelines

Traceability is necessary in order for the appropriate measures to be taken swiftly in the event of a crisis. To avoid administrative constraints becoming too much of a burden, a more flexible approach can be taken without compromising food safety regulations.

- The charitable institution/organisation must have a list of foodstuffs received from the relevant supplier.
- If the charitable institution/organisation (also) serves as a distribution centre, then a list of redistributed foodstuffs and their destination must be available.

g) Workplace

- Ensure that the area, depots and lorries are clean, organised and safe. Ensure that there are sufficient sanitary facilities for the employees (toilet, facility to wash hands).
- Make sure that waste is separated in time from the foodstuffs (dirt, cardboard, spoiled foodstuffs) and that effective means are available to ensure this (waste containers). Sort moldy and spoiled foodstuffs as quickly as possible after receipt. Do not store spoiled foodstuffs, not even temporarily, with other foodstuffs.
- Keep the cold store and freezer clean (including the evaporators) and check the temperature regularly (for example once a week) with a well-functioning thermometer.
- Ensure there is (preventive) pest control.
- Do not treat or process (cutting, portioning, etc.) unpackaged, perishable foodstuffs (pastries, cheese, salads, etc.), unless an appropriate (well-equipped and clean) room is available to do so.

Compliance

If a charitable institution or organisation operates according to the aforementioned guidelines, it is compliant with the requirements laid down in the Hygiene Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004. The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit, 'NVWA') may carry out checks, and if food safety is not sufficiently guaranteed, further rules may be laid down. The aim is to ensure that safe foodstuffs are supplied.

Foodstuffs with a very long shelf-life			
<i>Product</i>	<i>Detailed description</i>	<i>Spoilage characteristics</i>	<i>Storage guidelines</i>
Salt, sugar, flour		No spoilage if stored in dry conditions. May go stale after a very long time. Also watch out for hardening, the absorption of humidity, the presence of insects, mites, rancidity and mould	Up to one year (if not more) after the best before date, provided that the foodstuff still bears its characteristic qualities and that the packaging bear no visible defects. With the exception of (powdered) baby milk: respect the best before date!
Dry pasta products	Noodles, macaroni, spaghetti		
Couscous, semolina			
Coffee, tea			
Rice			
Instant powder (low in fat)	Coffee, mixed spices, pudding		
Water, soft drinks and long-life/UHT drinks (e.g. fruit juices)		Flavour can deteriorate (browning)	
Preserved foods, in a can/glass jar	Vegetables, fruit, soup, meat, fish, coffee cream, jam	Oxidation of the can/lids Gas formation (bulging can), alteration in colour or smell	
Syrup, treacle, honey		Saccharification	
Sweets, boiled/hard	Lollipops, sour sweets		
Deep-frozen food	Originally put on the market as deep-frozen food	Drying out, fat rancidity	

Foodstuffs with a long shelf-life			
<i>Product</i>	<i>Detailed description</i>	<i>Spoilage characteristics</i>	<i>Shelf life guideline</i>
Dry biscuits		Stale, loss of flavour, change in flavour, drying out, changes in texture, presence of larvae and insects.	Up to two months (if not more) after the best before date, provided that the foodstuff still bears its characteristic qualities and that the foodstuff and its packaging have no visible defects. Ensure deep-frozen foodstuffs are stored at -18°C or below. With the exception of powdered baby milk: respect the best before date!
Muesli, breakfast cereals, cornflakes			
Spreads, (peanut butter, chocolate)		Fat rancidity, alteration in smell and colour, oxidation, mould formation, presence of insects.	
Crisps, salted snacks, peanuts			
Oil, frying fat			
Sauces	Chip sauce, mayonnaise, ketchup		
Instant powder (high in fat)	Soup, milk powder		
Margarine, butter			
Hard cheeses	E.g. Gouda, Emmental, Parmesan		
Sweets, soft	With filling, chocolate, liquorice		
Sterilised milk and milk products	UHT/ long-life milk, custard in a carton. Sterilised bottled products	Surrounding smells can get into the packaging. Alteration or loss of flavour.	
Frozen foods	Fresh produce, frozen no later than one day before the expiry of the use by or best before date	Drying out (freezer burn), rancidity	

Foodstuffs with a limited shelf-life			
<i>Product</i>	<i>Detailed description</i>	<i>Spoilage characteristics</i>	<i>Shelf life guideline</i>
Bread, rye bread, bake-off bread		Stale, mould formation	Respect the best before date. Possible exceptions, but be careful to assess well! Fresh bread can be frozen, preferably consume within 2-3 weeks.
Cake, biscuits with filling, soft cakes/cookies/biscuits, gingerbread		Mould formation	
Semi-preserved foodstuffs (herring, mussels, etc.)	Refrigeration required	Fat rancidity	
Reduced hard cheeses (slices, grated)			
Vegetables and fruit (fresh, not soft fruit)		Mould formation	Assess visually (should not show any spoilage).

Foodstuffs with a short shelf-life			
<i>Product</i>	<i>Detailed description</i>	<i>Spoilage characteristics</i>	<i>Shelf life guideline</i>
Fresh meat, chicken, fish, Cakes/pastries	These foodstuffs often have a use by date and refrigeration is almost always necessary (at or below 7°C). In some cases, refrigeration at or below 4°C is required (e.g. fish).	Bacterial growth (possibly mould) and rotting	NEVER accept and/or distribute after the use by/best before date. The consumer must still be able to consume the product on its use by/best before date, at the latest. It is important the cold chain remain unbroken (storage, transport, distribution); if this is not guaranteed, do NOT distribute the foodstuffs.
Refrigerated meals, salads			
Dairy-based desserts			
Fresh dairy (milk and yoghurt products)			
Soft cheeses			
Freshly squeezed fruit juice			
Cut vegetables and fruit (fresh)			

Eggs			The expiry date for distribution by the charitable institution/organisation is the indicated best before date.
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Despite efforts to keep the information sheets as up-to-date as possible, it can happen that in the meantime a new regulation has been announced. The text of the applicable legislation is decisive. For questions about the content of this information sheet, please contact the Customer Contact Centre of the NVWA: 0800-0388.