

**THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH –
THE MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT – THE
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND
TRADE**

**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness**

Ha Noi, day 27 month 10 year 2014

No. 34/2014/TTLT-BYT-
BNNPTNT-BCT

JOINT CIRCULAR

Guiding the goods label for some foods, food additives and aids for processing packaged foods

Pursuant to the Law on food safety dated June 17, 2010;

*Pursuant to the Decree No.38/2012/ND-CP dated April 25, 2012 stipulating in
details the execution of some articles of the Law on food safety;*

*Pursuant to the Decree No.89/2006/ND-CP dated August 30, 2006 by the
Government on goods labels;*

*Pursuant to the Decree No.63/2012/ND-CP dated August 31, 2012 by the
Government stipulating functions, duties, authorities and organizational
structures of the Ministry of Health;*

*Pursuant to the Decree No. 199/2013/ND-CP dated November 26, 2013 by the
Government stipulating functions, duties, authorities and organizational
structures of the Ministry of Industry and Trade;*

*At the proposal by Director of Food Safety Department – Ministry of Health,
Chief of Science and Technology Department – Ministry of Industry and Trade,
Director of National Agro- Forestry – Fisheries Quality Assurance Department
– Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development;*

*The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,
Ministry of Industry and Trade have issued the Joint Circular guiding goods
label for foods, food additives and packaged food processing aids,*

Chapter I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Scope of adjustment and subject of application

1. This Joint Circular stipulates the goods label for processed foods, food additives and packaged food processing aids circulating in Vietnam (Hereinafter referred to as *the product*).

2. This Joint Circular is not applied to genetically modified foods, preliminarily processed foods, fresh foods which are not sold directly to consumers and plainly packaged foods (unclosed packaging).
3. Labels of the products produced for export must ensure no deviation from true nature of the product, no violation of Vietnam law and the importers' law.
4. This Joint Circular is applied to organizations, individuals as producers, traders and importers of processed foods, food additives and packaged food processing aids in Vietnam.

Article 2. Interpretation of terms

In this Joint Circular, some terms are construed as follows:

1. *Product labels* mean handwritings, printouts, drawings, photocopies of letters, images being affixed, printed, molded, and inscribed directly on the product, product packages or on other materials attached to the product, product packages to show necessary information about that product.
 - a) *Main part of labels* (front part) means a part of the label that allows easiest and clearest view to consumers under normal display conditions, designed according to actual size of product and commercial packages;
 - b) *Remaining part of labels* means a part of the label where mandatory information and others are described. Back part of the label (side part) may be in close proximity, opposite, above or under front part of the label;
 - c) *-Secondary label* is the label showing the information which is mandatory to be translated into Vietnamese from a foreign language and added with mandatory issues in Vietnamese which is missing in original label.
2. *Ingredients of the product* mean all substances, raw materials and additives used to produce foods and exist in finished products even if their forms have been changed.
3. *Date of production, shelf-life*
 - a) *Date of manufacture* means the time -mark when production, processing, assembling, bottling, packaging, or other forms are completed for final phase of the product.
 - b) *Shelf-life* means a period during which the product still remains its nutritional value and ensures safety under preservation conditions noted on the label according to instructions from the producer.

c) *Expiry date* means the time mark after which the product is not permitted to be sold on the market.

d) *Best before date* is a period during which the product still retains all of its inherent quality under preservation conditions noted on the label.

4. *Batch* means a defined quantity of a product type with the same name, quality, raw materials, shelf-life and being manufactured in the same facility under the same conditions.

Article 3. Requirements of the goods label

1. Information or images, pictures, graphics and symbols on labels must be truthful and not cause confusion, misleading or deceptive, or create erroneous impressions regarding its character and effects in any respect.

2. It is prohibited to use wordings, symbols, and patterns that refer to or imply other products directly or indirectly and cause consumers to confuse the product with other products.

3. Minimum height of text of mandatory information on the label is 1.2 mm. In case one side of the package used for labeling (borders not taken into account) is below 80cm², the minimum height of the text is 0.9 mm. Color of the letters must be in contrast to background color of labels.

4. Labels of goods must ensure lasting existence, no erasure and no effects on the product quality.

5. Organizations, individuals are encouraged to describe nutritional information in labels according to instructions by International Food Standards (Codex)

Article 4. Labeling language

1. Labels of products manufactured and sold on Vietnamese market must be written in Vietnamese and noted with adequate mandatory information as stipulated in this Joint Circular. Depending on requirement of each product type, an alternative language may be used. Information in other languages must be corresponding to that in Vietnamese and letter size is not permitted to be larger than the information in Vietnamese.

2. Products imported for sale on Vietnamese market must be labeled as follows:

a) Mandatory information introduced into secondary labels must be made in Vietnamese attached with goods labels. Secondary labels must be attached to the product or packages and must not hide product information. Information noted

on secondary labels must not cause misunderstanding to the information on the label;

b) Mandatory information on labels must be adequate and written in Vietnamese

Article 5. Label's information

1. Information mandatory to be introduced into labels: product name; composition; product quantity; date of manufacture; shelf-life and preservation instructions; usage instruction; name and address of organizations, individuals taking responsibility for the product; origins; number of Certificate of Declaration of conformity or Certificate of Declaration of conformity with the food safety regulations; recommendations and warnings on food safety.
2. Other information of labels includes words, images, symbols, marks conveying different information.

Chapter II

REGULATIONS ON LABELING AND MANNER OF LABELING

Article 6. Name of product

1. Product name applied on labels is initiated by food production and trading organizations, individuals themselves. Product name must ensure the following requirements:
 - a) The product name must not cause erroneous conception of nature, uses of foods, food additives and food processing aids; must not cause misunderstanding to consumers. The product name must be written on main part of labels.
 - b) The product name must conform to the name specified in Certificate of Declaration of conformity or Certificate of Declaration of conformity with the food safety regulations.
2. Name of imported product written on secondary labels must remain unchanged but name of goods category must be added and accompanied with a name in foreign language or phonetically transcribed into Vietnamese and must ensure compliance with Vietnamese law on goods labels.
3. In case a product consists of various types of the same category contained in the same commercial package, name of that product to be written shall follow name of goods category accompanied with manufacturer's trade mark or brand name of the product.

4. Product name can be accompanied with other supporting words on the label's main part in order to help consumers understand nature and natural conditions of the product exactly.

5. In case name of an ingredient of the product is used as product name or part of product name, that ingredient must be written with quantity next to product name at a position easily noticeable with naked eye or on the part of listed ingredients.

Article 7. Product's ingredients

1. All ingredients must be specified on product labels except the product made of only one ingredient.

2. For ingredients specified with descending order in quantity or percentage of each ingredient, the phrase "Ingredients" must be noted before the ingredients listed.

3. In case one ingredient of the product is a mixture which consists of two other ingredients and over, ingredients of that mixture must be described in parentheses and in descending order of quantity. In case the mixture accounts for smaller than 5% of the finished product's quantity, that mixture is not required to be published except food additives having technological functions for the finished product.

4. For foods containing one or some of the following ingredients, these ingredients must be published on labels;

a) Cereals and foods made from cereals containing gluten; i.e., wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt or their hybrid varieties and products thereof

b) Crustaceans and products thereof;

c) Eggs and products thereof;

d) Fish and fish products;

D) Peanuts, soybeans and products thereof;

e) Milk and milk products (lactose included)

g) Tree nuts and nut products;

h) Sulfite (salt of sulfurous acid) in concentration of 10 mg/kg.

5. Water added to product shall be enumerated in the list of ingredients except part of the material is in the form of water such as salty water, syrup or soup used in the mixed product and that raw material is already written in the list of

ingredients. Water and volatile materials during the production are not required to be written in the list of ingredients.

6. For any condensed or reconstituted product, its ingredients must be listed in descending order in quantity and compulsorily added with a line "Ingredients of the reconstituted product accord with the instructions on the list".

7. For the list of ingredients, a specific name appropriate for the information stipulated for naming of a product and each ingredient must be used except that ingredients as listed using the common name of product category fail to give necessary information, group name can be employed as stipulated in Addenda enclosed herewith.

8. For food additives having their names in the list of additives accepted to be used in food in general and being defined in the following class, a corresponding class name along with a specific name and international numbering system (INS) must be used: acidity regulator, flavors, thickener, foaming agent, gelling agent, anti-caking agent, anti-foaming agent, glazing agent, antioxidant, humectants, bulking agent, preservative, bleaching agent, color retention agent, propellant, packaging gas, raising agent, emulsifier, stabilizer, firming agent, carrier, sequesterant, flour treatment agent, sweetener, color, enzyme.

9. For food additives subject to class of flavorings and flavor enhancers; denatured starch subject to the list of food additives accepted to be used in food, a corresponding class name must be used. Use of the word "flavorings" on labels must be accompanied with one or a combination of "natural", "nature-like", or "general or "man-made"

10. When an additive is added to a food product through initial raw materials it has no effects on the finished product, it is not required to be added to the list of ingredients.

Article 8. Product's quantity (net weight/real volumetric/quantity)

1. Product quantity must be written in the international system of units.

2. Product quantity for each product type must be written in the following manners:

a) In real volumetric for liquid type products;

b) In net weight for solid type food;

c) In net weight or real volumetric for foods, both solid and liquid or viscous.

3. For foods which are packaged in liquid environment, dry weight must be written next to net weight.

Article 9. Date of manufacture, shelf-life and instructions for preservation

1. Food manufacturers must ensure accurate and true information about date of manufacture, shelf-life on labels. Shelf-life must be written on direct package or outer package.

2. Date of manufacture may be written as “Production date” or “NSX” (Short form of ‘Production date’ in Vietnamese). Dates must be written in either of the following manners: Using two digits to indicate day and month, two for full four digits to indicate the year); full period (.), dash (-) or forward slash (/) or no character at all can be used between date, month and year. In case no character is used, only six digits are used.

3. Shelf-life must include the following information:

- a) Date and month if the shelf-life does not exceed 03 months;
- b) Month and year if the shelf-life is longer than 03 months;
- c) Date, month and year must be written in an unencrypted series of number.

4. The following products are not required to be written with shelf-life but date of manufacture;

- a) Bread or cakes being consumed within 24 hours after production;
- a) Cooking vinegar;
- c) Salt used for food;
- d) Sugar in solid form.

5. Writing date of manufacture and shelf-life for beverage containing at least 10% in alcoholic concentration/volume is not mandatory.

6. Instructions for preservation: shelf-life must be written along with preservation conditions (if any)

Article 10. Usage instructions

1. Usage instruction must be written on labels.

2. In case size of labels is smaller than 10cm², that information must be written in a usage instructional material attached to food product (Form of usage instruction sheet or secondary labels)

Article 11. Food safety’s recommendations and warnings

1. Recommendations on health must be based on scientific evidence and must be proved upon announcement of product.
2. Recommendations on nutritional comparisons must comply with the regulations in Addendum 2 enclosed herewith. In case Vietnam is yet to update recommendations on nutritional comparisons, instructions from Codex can be followed.
3. Warnings on safety (if any) must be written on labels with full instruction.
4. Emphasis on absence of one or some of ingredients in the product for the purpose of advertising is not permitted if qualities and uses of the ingredients are similar to substances and ingredients of the same category.

Article 12. Name and address of organizations, individuals responsible for product

Writing name and address of organizations, individuals responsible for the product in the following cases:

1. For imported product: writing name and address of organizations, individuals announcing the product.
2. For domestically manufactured product:
 - a) In case the product is manufactured at the registered place, name and address of the production facility must be written on labels according to the business registration certificate;
 - b) In case the product is manufactured at another place other than the registered place but carrying the same brand produced by the latter, address of the former, or name and address of organizations, individuals who announce the product must be written but ensure retrieval of origin;
 - c) In case the product is manufactured by two or more entities, name and address of the entity performing the final phase to complete the product for launching must be written.
 - d) In case names and addresses of other entities are added to labels for the purpose of advertising, the correlation between the entities who have their names and addresses added to labels must be written.

Article 13. Product's origin

1. For imported products, name of the country of origin must be written in accordance with the law on goods origin.

2. In case the product is packaged in another country different from the manufacturing country, in addition to the name of the country of origin, the name of the country where the final phase of packaging takes place must be written.

Article 14. Certificate of Declaration of conformity or Certificate of Declaration of conformity with the food safety regulations

Every product sold on the market must bear the number of Certificate of Declaration of conformity or Certificate of Declaration of conformity with the food safety regulations issued by competent authorities.

Article 15. Mandatory information's exemption

1. Exemption from mandatory labeling requirements is applied to labels smaller than 10 cm² or having secondary labels or usage instructions being accompanied.

With the exception of spices and herbs, small units with largest surface area being smaller than 10 cm² may be exempted from declaration of ingredients, shelf-life, and instructions for preservation, instruction of use if secondary labels or outer package have conveyed all of that information.

2. Secondary labeling shall be exempted in the following cases:

a) Food product is carried along for personal use within a limit of import tax exemption; Food product carried in diplomatic bags and consular bags; food product temporarily imported for export, placed in transit, transferred to bonded warehouses; food product as a sample for testing or studying; food product as a sample to be displayed in trade fair and exhibition;

b) Raw material, food additives, food processing aids, packages, imported for internal production only, transported internally between warehouses from province to province under the same enterprise's system.

Chapter III

LABELING INFORMATION FOR SOME SPECIAL PRODUCTS

Article 16. Business's food additives

In addition to labeling requirements as stipulated in Chapter II hereof, food additives used for business must be labeled as follows:

1. Category and name of the additive, example: emulsifier: Nat polyphosphate; or with international code of the additive (code is placed in parentheses), example: emulsifier (452i)

2. International code (if any)
3. If there are two or more food additives in a package, their names must be written fully in descending order of weight in each package.
4. “Used for food products” must be clearly described under the name of the additive with height of characters being 2 mm at a minimum and bold printing.

Article 17. Irradiated foods

Food products being manufactured, processed and preserved with the use of irradiation technique must be described with the line “Irradiated foods” or displayed on labels an image of irradiated foods according to the international food irradiation system agreed to put into practice by Vietnam.

Chapter IV

IMPLEMENTATION PROVISIONS

Article 18. Implementation effect

1. This Joint Circular takes effect on December 19, 2014.
2. The Circular No. 15/2000/TT-BYT dated June 30, 2000 by the Minister of Health guiding the labeling of foods shall be expired since the effective date of this Joint Circular.
3. The product granted Certificate of Declaration of conformity or Certificate of Declaration of conformity with the food safety regulations has its product label not conforming with the regulations in this Joint Circular shall not permitted to continue production and importing after December 31, 2015. In case the product is yet to be sold out, it is still permitted to continue its circulation but must not exceed the shelf-life described on the label.

Article 19. Responsibilities

Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Ministry of Industry and Trade have assigned Vietnam Food Administration (Ministry of Health), National Agro - Forestry - Fisheries Quality Assurance Department (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development) and Department of Science and Technology (Ministry of Industry and Trade) are responsible for implementing, inspecting the exercising of this Joint Circular on a national level for products under assignment for management.

Any difficulties arising on the implementation of this Circular shall be reported to the aforesaid Ministries for consideration and handling./.

For the Minister of Industry and Trade

The Deputy Minister

Do Thang Hai

For the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Deputy Minister

Vu Van Tam

For the Minister of Health

The Deputy Minister

Nguyen Thanh Long

APPENDIX I

GROUP NAME

(Attached with the Joint Circular No. 34/2014/TTLT-BYT-BNNPTNT-BCT dated October 10, 2014 by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Ministry of Industry and Trade)

Name of raw material	Name of raw material group
Refined oil other than olive oil	“Oil” together with the term “vegetable” or “animal”, qualified by the term “hydrogenated” or “partially-hydrogenated”, as appropriate.
Refined fats	“Fat” together with either the term “vegetable” or “animal”
Starches other than chemically modified starches	“Starch”
All species of fish where the fish constitutes an ingredient of another food and on that label the presentation of such food does not refer to a specific species of fish	“Fish”
All types of meat where such meat constitutes an ingredient of another food and provided that the labeling	“Meat”

and presentation of such a food does not refer to a specific type of meat	
All types of cheese where the cheese or mixture of cheeses constitutes an ingredient of another food and provided that the labeling and presentation of such food does not refer to a specific type of cheese	“Cheese”
All spices and spice extracts not exceeding 2% by weight either singly or in combination in the food	“Spice”, “spices” or “mixed spices”
All herbs or parts of herbs not exceeding 2% by weight either singly or in combination in the food	“herbs” or “mixed herbs”
All types of gum preparations used in the manufacture of gum base for chewing gum	“Gum base”
All types of sucrose	“Sugar”
Anhydrous dextrose and dextrose monohydrate	“Dextrose” or “glucose”
All types of caseinates	All types of caseinates
Dairy products containing a minimum of 50% of milk protein (m/m) in dry matter	Milk protein
Pressed, extracted, or refined cocoa butter	“Cocoa butter”
All crystallized fruit in which sugar makes up not more than 10% of the total weight	“Crystallized fruit”

APPENDIX II

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS ON NUTRITIONAL COMPARISONS PERMITTED LABELING

(Attached with the Joint Circular No. 34/2014/TTLT-BYT-BNNPTNT-BCT dated October 27, 2014 by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Ministry of Industry and Trade)

1. Energy

- Low calories: 4 kcal (170kj) in 100g (solid) or 20 kcal (80kj) in 100 ml (liquid).
- No calories: 4 kcal in 100ml (liquid).

2. Fat:

- Low fat: 3g in 100g (solid) or 1.5g in 100ml (liquid).
- No fat: 0.5g in 100g (solid) or 100ml (liquid).

3. Saturated fat:

- Low saturated fat: 1.5g in 100g (solid) or 0.75g in 100ml (liquid) and providing 10% of the energy from saturated fat
- No saturated fat: 0.1g in 100g (solid) or 0.1g in 100ml (liquid).

4. Cholesterol:

- Low fat: 3g in 100g (solid) or 1.5g in 100ml (liquid).
- No cholesterol: 0.005g in 100g (solid) or 0.005g in 100ml (liquid). Smaller than 1.5g of saturated fat on 100g (solid) or 0.75g of saturated fat in 100ml (liquid) and providing 10% of the energy from saturated fat

5. Sugar:

- No sugar: 0.5g in 100g (solid) or 0.5g in 100ml (liquid).

6. Sodium:

- Low sodium: 0.12g in 100g.
- Very low sodium: 0.04g in 100g.
- No sodium: 0.005g in 100g.

7. Protein:

- As protein supplements: Providing 10% of nutrient reference value in 100g (solid) or 5% of nutrient reference value in 100ml (liquid) Providing 5% of nutrient reference value for 100 kcal (12% nutrient reference value for 1 MJ) or providing 10% of nutrient reference value for a serving.
- High protein: Twice as much as the value of protein supplements

8. Vitamins and minerals

- As vitamin and mineral supplements: Providing 5% of nutrient reference value in 100g (solid) or 7.5% of nutrient reference value in 100ml (liquid) Providing 5% of nutrient reference value for 100 kcal (12% nutrient reference value for 1MJ) or providing 15% of nutrient reference value for a single serving.
- High vitamins and minerals: Twice as much as the value of vitamin and mineral supplements

9. Fiber:

- As fiber supplements: 3g in 100g³ or 1.5g in 100 kcal, or providing 10% of daily nutrient reference value for a single serving.
- High fiber: 6g for 100 g³ or 3g for 100 kcal, or providing 20% of daily nutrient reference value for a single serving.