

Country of origin labelling: Further reading

FIC legal reference

The requirements of the [FIC](#) in relation to the giving of country of origin or place of provenance information are all contained in one Article, Article 26.

Meat sold as such

The Implementing Act giving the detailed provisions on the indication of origin of fresh, chilled and frozen meat of pigs, sheep, goats and poultry was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on 14 December 2013 (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. [1337/2013](#)). In general terms the regulation provides for an indication, on the label, of the Member State or third country where the animal was reared for a period representing a substantial part of the normal cycle of rearing for each species, as well as of the Member State or third country where it was slaughtered. The term 'origin' is reserved for meat obtained from animals born, reared and slaughtered, and therefore wholly obtained, in one single Member State or third country. The simplified system of indications for minced meat and trimmings is in recognition of the characteristics of their production processes.

This labelling system requires traceability rules to be applied, beginning at the slaughterhouse, to ensure the link between the labelled meat and the animal or group of animals from which that meat was obtained. Where the link is to a group of animals, the size of the group is defined as follows:

- In the case of the cutting of carcasses, by the number cut together and constituting one batch for the cutting plant.
- In the case of further cutting or mincing, by the number of carcasses the meat of which constitutes one batch for the cutting or mincing plant.

The size of a batch must not exceed one day's production in a single establishment.

In relation to the indication of Member State or third country of rearing and minimum rearing periods, the following rules apply:

- For pigs:
 - When slaughtered at older than six months, the last country where a rearing period of at least four months took place
 - When slaughtered younger than six months
 - With a live weight of at least 80kg, the country where rearing after the animal reached 30kg took place
 - With a live weight less than 80kg, the country where the whole rearing period took place
- For sheep and goats, the last country where a rearing period of at least 6 months took place or, where the animal is slaughtered at younger than six months, the country where the whole rearing period took place.
- For poultry, the last country where a rearing period of at least one month took place or, where the animal is slaughtered at younger than one month, the country where the whole rearing period after the animal was placed for fattening took place.

Where these rearing periods are not attained in any country, the indication should be 'Reared in: several member States of the EU' or 'Reared in: several non-EU countries' or 'Reared in: several EU and non-EU countries' as appropriate. These general statements may be replaced by 'Reared in: (list of the Member States or third countries where the animal was reared)' if the business can satisfy its local enforcement officers that this is an accurate statement.

Minced meat and trimmings may give less specific indications as follows:

- 'Origin: EU' – all animals born, reared and slaughtered in Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: EU' – all animals reared and slaughtered in Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: non-EU' – all animals imported into the EU
- 'Reared in: non-EU' and 'Slaughtered in: EU' – all animals imported into the EU for slaughter and slaughtered in Member States
- 'Reared and slaughtered in: EU and non-EU':
 - minced meat or trimmings from animals reared and slaughtered in Member States and from meat imported into the EU or
 - all animals imported into the EU and slaughtered in Member States

These provisions do not prevent businesses from adding further details regarding the provenance of meat on a voluntary basis, e.g. specifying an originating region within a country, for instance 'Suffolk' or 'Bavaria', or giving details of the place of birth of animals.

These mandatory origin indication requirements do not apply until 1 April 2015. Meat not providing such indications but placed on the EU market before 1 April 2015 can be sold until stocks are exhausted.

'Foreign primary ingredients'

As with meat sold as such, the introduction of the origin indication requirements for 'foreign primary ingredients' is dependent on further details being laid down in an Implementing Act. At the time of writing this has not yet been published. FIC Implementing Acts apply as from 1 April in any calendar year and the prospect is that the further rules for this provision may not apply until 1 April 2016 at the earliest.

Other possible extensions to mandatory origin labelling

Meat as an ingredient

The Commission's report to the European Parliament and the Council regarding the pros and cons of introducing the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for meat used as an ingredient, as envisaged by Article 26(6) of the FIC, was published on 17 December 2013 ([COM\(2013\) 755 final](#)).

The report aims to assess consumers' attitude towards mandatory origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient, to examine the feasibility of such labelling and to analyse the costs and benefits of the introduction of such measures.

It examines three scenarios:

- Maintaining origin labelling on voluntary basis.
- Introducing mandatory origin labelling based on EU/non EU or EU/third country.
- Introducing mandatory origin labelling indicating the Member State or third country.

The report is accompanied by a Commission Staff Working Document, which provides detailed information underpinning its conclusions ([COM\(2013\) 755 final](#)).

Other products

Under the terms of the FIC, by 13 December 2014, the Commission is to submit reports to the European Parliament and the Council regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for the following foods:

- Types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry.
- Milk and milk used as an ingredient in dairy products.
- Unprocessed foods.
- Single ingredient products.
- Ingredients that constitute over 50% of a food.

Concerning unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that constitute over 50% of a food, the Commission has commissioned an external study with [Terms of Reference](#) dated 9 August 2013 to inform the development of a report on these foods.