



## **Code of Practice for the labelling of pork and pork products**

### **INTRODUCTION**

British consumers consider a range of factors when buying pork and pork products. Research shows that while price and freshness are primary concerns when deciding what to buy, consumers want clear and unambiguous labelling so that they have the ability to make an informed choice. Of particular interest is country of origin, pig production terms such as free range and the use of breed names.

This Code of Practice sets down the minimum standards which supporting businesses will use when labelling pork and pork products. It is largely based on advice on best practice from the Food Standards Agency<sup>1</sup> and LACORS.

The Code sets out a number of principles that supporting businesses will use in their labelling. It then lists examples of the terminology that could be used. Companies may use similar terms with the same meaning in the design of their labels and literature.

### **SCOPE**

The Code of Practice applies initially to fresh and frozen, pork, bacon, gammon, ham, sausages and pork pies. Once established it is planned to extend coverage of the code to other processed products where pork is an important constituent.

### **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**

#### **Background**

Under EU law specific food groups are required to be labelled with information on country of origin. These include beef, veal, fish, shellfish, most fresh fruit and vegetables and poultry meat imported from outside the EC. Other food groups including pork and pork products are covered by The Food Labelling Regulations 1996.

There is a general principle in the regulations that the place of origin or provenance of the food should be labelled if failure to do so might mislead a purchaser.

However there are areas where there is a lack of clarity or the regulations do not match consumer's expectations. For example the legislation allows imported pork processed in this country to be labelled as Produced in the UK (as this was the place of last substantial change).

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/labelregsguidance/originlabelling>

This Code of Practice addresses these ambiguities and provides clarity for consumers in the labelling of pork and pork products.

## 1. Code of Practice - Retail Labelling

- 1.1 The country of origin of pork and the pork used in processed products will be clearly displayed on the front of the packet. If this is not practical due to label size or extended origin descriptions the country of origin will be clearly displayed on the side or back of the packet. For products not sold pre-packed a country of origin statement will be displayed in close proximity to the product concerned.
- 1.2 Single country of origin declarations mean that the pig used to produce the pork or pork product was born, reared and slaughtered in that country.

### *Example*

“Origin country x”

“Country y bacon”

- 1.3 Where a country of origin is stated and the pig is born, reared or slaughtered in more than one country then additional information will be provided on the pack. This will be either a) a statement of each of the countries involved or b) the country where the pigs were born or reared (farmed) will be stated.

### *Example*

“Country x pork from pigs born in country y and reared / farmed in country z”

“Country x pork from pigs reared in country y”

“Bacon from country x from pigs reared in country y”

“Country x pork from pigs born in country y”

- 1.4 The terms “Produced in the UK” and “Packed in the UK” can be ambiguous about origin if not qualified and so will not be used in isolation. The country or countries of origin will be clearly stated.

### *Example*

“Produced in the UK using pork from country X”

“Made in the UK using country x and country y pork”

“Packed in the UK using pork from country x”

- 1.5 Pork products such as sausages, ham and pork pies can sometimes be made with pork from a number of different countries. In such cases the countries of origin will be stated or the EU will be the declared origin

### *Example*

“made with pork from country x and country y”

“made with imported pork”

“made with pork sourced from the EU”

“made with pork from a number of EU countries”

“made with pork from country x, country y or country z”

- 1.6 Statements of origin containing a list of possible countries that includes the UK such as “Produced using pork from *country a, b, c or UK*” has the potential to mislead consumers that the product could be entirely or predominantly of UK origin. Therefore this will not be used.
- 1.7 Where national terms and symbols (such as flags or logos containing flags) such as Great British Classics are used as part of the description of processed pork products then this means that the ingredients that characterise the product (such as bacon or the pork in pork pies) and all of the main production/manufacturing processes associated with the product originated within that place or country.
- 1.8 Product specific terms or recipes that state a geographical origin within the UK will be made from UK pork. Otherwise they will be accompanied by an origin declaration in the same field of vision on the label.

**Example**

“Wiltshire Cure bacon”

“Wiltshire Cure bacon.... *from country x*”

“Melton Mowbray Pork Pie.... using *country x pork*”

“Cumberland sausage..... made from *country x and country y pork*”

“Lincolnshire sausages..... from EU pork”

- 1.9 The use of breed descriptions that state a geographical origin within the UK will be from UK pork. Otherwise they will be accompanied by an origin declaration in the same field of vision on the label.

**Example**

“Hampshire cross breed pork”

“Hampshire cross breed *country x* pork”

“*Country y* Berkshire pork”

- 1.10 The use of trade names (for example Rural Valley) and/or imagery (for example English village scenes) used on packaging that could imply a UK country of origin will be UK origin. Otherwise they will be accompanied by an origin declaration in the same field of vision on the label.

**Example**

“Rural Valley pork”

“Rural Valley pork..... *from country x*

“Rural Valley..... *Country x* bacon ”

## **2. Code of Practice - Food service**

- 2.1 The country of origin of pork and the pork used in processed products will be available to customers either on menu, on accompanying literature, on a company website or directly from the company on request. Pork products such as sausages, ham and pork pies can sometimes be made with pork from

more than one country. In such cases the countries of origin will be available or the EU will be the declared origin.

- 2.2 The use of terminology and descriptions relating to origin on food service menus will be clear and unambiguous.
- 2.3 The use of the term “local” or “locally sourced” pork and pork products will be clearly defined and available to customers either on menu, on accompanying literature, on a company website or directly from the company on request.
- 2.4 Product specific terms or recipe names that state a UK geographical origin will be made from pork UK. Otherwise they will be accompanied by an origin statement on the menu or on accompanying literature.

**Example**

“Wiltshire Cure bacon”

“Wiltshire Cure gammon *from country x*”

“Melton Mowbray Pork Pie using *country x pork*”

“Cumberland sausage made with *country x and country y pork*”

“Lincolnshire sausages made with EU pork”

- 2.5 The use of breed descriptions that state a UK geographical origin will be UK origin pork. Otherwise they will be accompanied by an origin statement on the menu or on accompanying literature.

**Example**

“Gloucestershire Old Spot gammon”

“Hampshire cross bred pork from *country x*”

### **3. PIG PRODUCTION TERMS**

#### **Background**

A number of terms relating to pig production methods are currently in use on retail packs and menus featuring pork and pork products. These include free range, outdoor bred and outdoor reared. There are accepted industry norms relating to these terms but there are not agreed, auditable definitions as there are, for example in the poultry sector. The Code of Practice therefore includes such definitions so that consumers can be fully informed when buying these products.

The precise minimum requirements that define these terms are still under discussion and will be published in mid-April 2010.

#### **3.1 Free Range**

Pigs are born outside, in fields where they remain until they are sent for processing. They are provided with food, water and shelter and are free to roam within defined boundaries. Very generous space allowances are defined with minimum requirements dependent on soil conditions and rotation

practices. Breeding sows are kept outside, in fields for their productive life. They are provided with food, water and shelter with generous minimum space allowances.

### **3.2 Outdoor Bred**

Pigs are born outside, in fields where they are kept until weaning. Breeding sows are kept outside in fields for their productive lives. Where soil types and climate are a constraint gestating sows may be housed for a defined limited period in groups on deep straw bedding. They are provided with food, water and shelter with generous minimum space allowances. Pork and pork products labelled as Outdoor Bred will also contain a statement about how the pigs are subsequently farmed. Where possible this will be in the same field of vision on the label as Outdoor Bred. Retailers and food service businesses are encouraged to make further information available about the method of finishing to consumers through literature or websites.

#### **Example**

“Outdoor bred.....and housed in straw barns”

### **3.3 Outdoor reared**

Outdoor bred pigs that are reared for approximately half their life (defined as at least 30kg) outside in fields. They are provided with food, water and shelter and generous minimum space allowances. Pork and pork products labelled as Outdoor Reared will also contain a statement about the way the pigs are subsequently farmed. Where possible this will be in the same field of vision on the label as Outdoor Reared. Retailers and food service businesses are encouraged to make further information available about the method of finishing to consumers through literature or websites.

#### **Example**

“Outdoor reared .....and housed in straw barns”

- 3.4 The term **Outdoor** used on its own will mean that the pork and pork products come from Outdoor Reared pigs that are kept outside, in fields until they are sent for processing. Minimum space allowances are generous although these are lower than for Free Range pigs.
- 3.5 In all cases it is allowed to house pigs for a very limited period of time in case of veterinary treatment, emergency and when directed or advised to do so by the relevant authorities (for example during an exotic disease outbreak)
- 3.6 Label imagery that features outdoor pig farming scenes will only be used on Free Range, Outdoor Bred, Outdoor Reared or Outdoor products.

#### **4. BREED NAMES**

- 4.1 Where a specific breed name is used without qualification (for example Hampshire pork) this comes from pigs resulting from the mating of a pedigree boar and sow of the same named breed.
- 4.2 Where pork and pork products come from the mating of animals of different breeds (i.e. a pedigree Berkshire boar with a commercial hybrid sow) reference to the parentage will be provided on the label. The following types of statements (using bacon as an example) could be used:
  - A. Berkshire Cross Breed Bacon
  - B. Cross Breed Berkshire Bacon
  - C. Produced from Pigs Sired by Pedigree Berkshire Boars
  - D. Produced from Pigs Bred from Pedigree Berkshire Sires
  - E. Produced from Pigs Bred from Pedigree Berkshire Boars
- 4.3 While all these descriptions can be used Statements A and B are considered to be the true names of the food for these products. Statements C, D and E are likely to be statements accompanying and expanding upon the true name.
- 4.4 The type font and size used on packaging will not give an undue prominence to the breed over the actual cross breed status of the meat.
- 4.5 Any reference to a specific breed should refer to an animal registered by an officially recognised registration authority licensed within the EU, for example the British Pig Association.
- 4.6 If the produce is not from two pedigree registered animals of the same breed, any photographs or illustrations shown on labels, point of sale materials, advertisements or supporting literature should be clearly linked with the true name statement (i.e. captioned with the words in paragraph 3 (A or B) above). Such captions should be sufficiently prominent and clear to avoid the consumer being misled (i.e. in the same weight and size of font as any other reference to the breed on the packaging).
- 4.7 This Code of Practice applies to retail labels used on pre-packed or loose pork and pork products. It also applies to the use of the terms in food service.
- 4.8 Any trade mark applied to the products should not be capable of being confused with the actual breed/cross breed of the product.

#### **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on the Code of Practice contact Mick Sloyan at BPEX.

T. 0247 647 8791

[Mick.sloyan@bpex.org.uk](mailto:Mick.sloyan@bpex.org.uk)