



BRC POSITION SUNFLOWER OIL SUBSTITUTION COMMUNICATION

24 March 2022

We approached the Government requesting labelling pragmatism for products containing sunflower oil. This short-term immediate request was due to a lack of availability of this ingredient because of the war in Ukraine. Fraud thrives in these types of unfortunate circumstances and pragmatism will give our members the flexibility to source other available oils, while retaining all the controls and checks necessary to keep consumers safe and maintain product availability.

Our members take their responsibilities very seriously. Consumer safety is our top priority, and any pragmatic approach should not introduce an increased risk to safety.

We agree with Government those pragmatic measures must provide adequate assurance that consumers will not be misled or have their purchasing decisions prejudiced.

However, the measures must be appropriate and proportionate to the risks and take into account the steps each business will be taking to ensure their labels comply with the legal requirements in the medium term.

Label changes

When changing labels retailers will look to replace the reference to sunflower oil in the ingredient list for the following:

Vegetable oils followed immediately by a list of indications of specific vegetable origin and may be followed by the phrase 'in varying proportions'.

The statement 'in varying proportions' is optional. Companies are encouraged to be as accurate as possible when listing the oils contained in the product, but the Government accepts that some of the listed oils may not always be present in the product.

Pragmatic communication

In the interim and until labels are changed, the following pragmatic and proportionate approach will be adopted:

When the substitution involves an allergen – In cases where sunflower oil is substituted with an oil derived from an allergenic ingredient (unless exempt e.g., fully refined soya oil), a label change reflecting this substitution is required. Not doing so will result in a food safety risk and this is not acceptable. Example, the use of peanut or sesame oil will trigger a label change before its use is permitted.

Substitutions on products highlighting the presence of sunflower oil – for products where the presence of sunflower oil is a feature, e.g. because it is part of the product name, the product claims to contain sunflower oil or makes a claim about the benefits of this oil, consideration will have to be given to the consumer not being misled about this featured ingredient having been substituted. Businesses will need to consider how to provide information about the substitution or indeed make a decision not to sell the product. We believe one way of doing it, is to ink jet the words 'RAPESEED OIL' on the label. Example, crisps with a claim fried in sunflower oil.

All other substitutions – the substitution of sunflower oil with rapeseed oil, and other oils in future, will be addressed through general consumer communications.

The wording in these general statements is not standardised; however, all companies are asked to use the following key words:

Substitution of sunflower oil / substitute sunflower oil

Rapeseed oil (most likely) replacement

Other oils may be used

No allergenic risk / No allergen risk

Companies are encouraged **NOT** to use the words shortage / global shortage or equivalent to avoid concerning consumers and panic buying.

Companies can add as much supplementary information in their statements, as they believe necessary.

Each retailer will discuss and agree the final wording and the route to disseminate these general statements with their Primary Authority.

Government expects the use of Point of Sale (POS) displays.

The same approach will be taken with other oils, once FSA/FSS release the risk assessment they are conducting for each of them.