



**Label better
less waste**

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Redistribution checklist

**Date labels, storage advice
and freezing for food safety**

Produce of



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 **Food
Standards
Agency**
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 **Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs**

Redistribution labelling advice checklist

This checklist highlights the essential labelling-related requirements for safely and legally redistributing surplus food, and the additional requirements when freezing food to be redistributed.

The scope of the requirements covers surplus food from commercial food businesses manufacturing, retailing and supplying to any type (e.g. charitable or commercial) of redistribution organisation. All such organisations are referred to as Food Business Operators (FBO) in the main Guidance document.

This information can be adapted and transposed into your own organisation's processes or procedures.

NB All of these requirements must be met in order to safely and legally redistribute food, so if any of the text is amended to better fit your organisation's methodologies, then it is essential that the overall requirements are adhered to.

Date labels – what surplus food can be redistributed?
Key facts at-a-glance:

- Surplus food products must be labelled correctly.
- Food past its 'Best Before' date can be redistributed
- Food past its 'Use By' date must not be redistributed (unless it has been frozen and relabelled prior to the date expiring). See [freezing checklist](#).

Supplying and receiving surplus food checklist

Supplying surplus – your responsibilities



- Have a food safety management system, with all its steps in place.
- Check the date labels. It is illegal to supply food that is past its 'Use By' date'
- Store and transport the food safely – follow the storage guidance.
- If the food is chilled, store at the correct temperature, at all times.
- All food must be clearly labelled (or supplied with this information) with; date label, storage and use/cooking guidance (as well as other legally required information, such as ingredients with allergens, highlighted).
- If the fresh food is going to be frozen, follow the [freezing guidance on the following page](#)
- If supplying surplus near or beyond its 'Best Before' date, check all products are of sufficient quality, pack integrity is maintained. and indicate how long each will be good to eat. You can use the [WRAP/FSA/Defra guidance](#) for this.

Receiving surplus – your responsibilities



- Have a food safety management system, with all its steps in place.
- Check the date labels. It is illegal to supply food that is past its 'Use By' date'.
- Store, transport and cook/use the food safely. Check you have all the storage and use guidance needed - and follow it.
- If the food is chilled, store at the correct temperature, at all times.
- If the food is fresh and frozen, or you will freeze it, follow the [freezing guidance on the following page](#).
- If receiving surplus near or beyond its 'Best Before' date, check all products are of sufficient quality, pack integrity is maintained, and indicate how long each will be good to eat. You can use the [WRAP/FSA/Defra guidance](#) for this.

Freezing checklist

Freezing – guidance for supplying and receiving surplus food

Freezing acts as a 'pause button' on the shelf life of food. So, if the food is suitable for freezing, it's a great way to help more food get redistributed. It must be done safely and there are some specific labelling requirements.

The organisation freezing the food must:

- Ensure that the food is in an acceptable condition and suitable for freezing (e.g. as indicated by manufacturer's instructions).
- Ensure the food is frozen all of the way through to the core.
- Supply information relating to the food and its freezing to the receiving organisation – including information about when the product was frozen and instructions for defrosting and cooking.
- Re-label the food (see below).
- Demonstrate the date that the food was frozen.
- For food carrying a 'Use By' date, demonstrate that the freezing process commenced early enough to ensure that that the food is frozen by or before midnight of the day of the expiry of the 'Use By' date¹.

The frozen food must be relabelled because the nature of the food will have changed. You must:

- Remove the original 'Use By' date (if the product had one) and apply a new 'Best Before' date.
- Ensure a system is in place to record when the food was frozen as this will help demonstrate that the food is safe.
- Provide new / updated instructions for storage and use / cooking. Make sure these clearly show that food should be thawed under refrigeration and used within 24 hours.

¹ Ideally, the freezing process should commence early enough so that the food reaches at least -2°C at midnight of the day of the expiry of the 'Use By' date. While the food may not be fully frozen at midnight, there should be no risk to food safety if the freezing process is underway early enough before that time¹, with the aim of freezing the food through to the core.



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WRAP

Second Floor
Blenheim Court
19 George Street
Banbury
Oxon OX16 5BH

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