Date Marking and Food Waste

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History - I

• Since 2009 the Dutch government stimulates the reduction of food waste (as part of policy on sustainable food).

• In 2011 research on ‘perceived barriers in laws and regulations’ regarding food waste (Wageningen UR).

• The research showed that:

  there are hardly any legal barriers, but...
  ...many rules are experienced as a barrier.
History - II

Three causes of barriers regarding expiry dates:

1. Lack of clarity on the meaning of expiry dates
2. Short expiry dates for non-perishable and very long shelf life products
3. Product liability for retail companies causes a tighter ‘best before’ date than the actual shelf life of a product

Start of a more detailed study on expiry dates
Study ‘Expiry date: a waste of time?’ - Aim

1. To investigate the possibility to reduce food waste under current legislation on expiry dates.

2. To indicate the use of expiry dates in practice and consequences for food waste.
Study ‘Expiry date: a waste of time?’ - Conclusions

1. As a result of (new) EU legislation Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011) only a minimum durability date or a use-by date.

2. Longer expiry dates causes probably less waste (see recent WRAP study + TIFN (to be published)).

3. Manufacturers and retailers use different date types for similar products.

4. 15% of consumers waste is due to passing expiry date, 10% fresh products, 5% long shelf life products.

5. Abolish expiry dates for long-life products is not feasible or not worthwhile, due to legislation or potential.

6. Communication for consumers on expiry dates is broadly consistent.
Follow up – *Different actions are initiated*

1. Leaflet for companies explaining new rules on expiry dates.

2. Seminar for companies to stimulate a uniform use of expiry dates (i.e. do not use the ‘use by date’ as a marketing tool to give a product a fresher image).

3. The EC was asked for extension of the list of products which require no date (Annex A of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011).

4. Information through Dutch Nutrition Center on meaning of expiry dates. ([http://www.voedingscentrum.nl/encyclopedie/houdbaarheidsdatum-tht-tgt-.aspx](http://www.voedingscentrum.nl/encyclopedie/houdbaarheidsdatum-tht-tgt-.aspx)).

5. Stimulate producers to give consumers information on the shelf life of products.
Why extension of Annex A of Regulation 1169?

- Although little effect is to be expected, it is still an effect and an important signal to the society.
- In % the effect will be small, but in tonnage the effect might be large.
- There is already a list, why not extend it with more, similar products. (better regulation)
- Will sort effect in the whole chain, not only with consumers but also with producers and retailers. (keep product longer in stock)
- We expect that products with no date will be more donated to foodbanks. (because the date cannot be passed)

food will be used as food!
Are we ready?

- No! It’s an ongoing discussion in the Netherlands
- We are intending to do a study on terminology; will another translation of ‘best before’ be better understood?
- Recent study -> shelf life information in barcodes?
- Different ongoing studies regarding expiry dates and food supply chain.
- Risk assessment advice regarding criteria which could be used for extending Annex X
- Still trying stimulate industry to uniform the use of best before date for similar products.
- ...
Thank you for your attention

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