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Europe’s labels, too ambiguous or misleading, European Court of Auditors and SAFE find

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) and SAFE have released reports addressing the transparency of food labelling, with both concluding that more clarity is needed for consumers to be able to make informed choices.

SAFE’s report, commissioned to Ethica and Toluna, market research companies from Italy and the UK, reflects big shortcomings in consumers’ trust of labels: 67% of European consumers feel that companies do not provide all the necessary information on labels. [This survey](#) is based on a sample of 5,000 people from Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and Spain, covering a broad spectrum of dietary and consumer habits.

The report delves specifically into the claims of products that are marketed as natural, often without reasons to substantiate that claim.

89% of Europeans believe that institutions should adopt regulations to make labels more transparent, according to SAFE’s report. 85% consider it incorrect to use the word “natural” for products also containing synthetic ingredients. An 83% of the consumers surveyed demand that products with synthetic ingredients clearly state it on labelling.

Secretary General of SAFE Floriana Cimmarusti said: “This report stresses the need for the European Commission to produce clear legislation to distinguish synthetic and natural ingredients in products and to protect consumers from misleading labels. It is now clear that consumers demand higher protection. We expect this report to be considered as a basis for the future revisions of the EU’s legal framework on food safety”.



[The ECA report](#) highlights the legislative gaps in the EU legal framework and recommends the European Commission to analyse labelling practices, monitor consumer expectations, and strengthen member states' checks on voluntary labels.

ECA's report states that delayed updates of the legal framework limit consumers' ability to make informed choices.

According to the 2011 Food Information to Consumers Regulation, “the information” included on packaging “must be accurate, clear, easy to understand, and not misleading, and should not be ambiguous or confusing.”

About SAFE

SAFE– *Safe Food Advocacy Europe* was created with the aim of ensuring that consumer's health and concerns remain at the core of the EU's food legislation. SAFE is currently the only Brussels-based NGO specialised in the protection and representation of EU consumers in the food sector. SAFE strives to ensure safer food standards for consumers monitoring the EU food legislation process and cooperating with EU stakeholders to draft comprehensive food regulations. SAFE notably supports the development of policies and awareness-raising actions which jointly address health, environment, food safety and sustainability, all-the-while being involved in several EU-funded projects aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the food sector, increasing sustainability and promoting healthier food environments for consumers.