

Digital labelling

POSITION PAPER

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Digital labels on our food and drink can help us make better choices

Whether it's knowing how sustainable our food is to how nutritious it is, providing consumers with the right information in a transparent and accessible manner is at the heart of building more sustainable food systems.

Europe's food and drink manufacturers provide a wealth of information about their products – from ingredients, nutritional value, allergens, durability, to cooking and storing instructions, amongst others – directly on the label. Yet more and more, consumers and public authorities are demanding an ever-increasing amount of information to be provided on-pack, while the amount of space available on-pack is limited.

Incorporating digital solutions onto the food label can meet consumers' appetite for more information, overcoming the space constraints of physical labels whilst reducing the generation of packaging waste.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the development of the digital COVID-19 passport have increased consumer awareness, literacy, acceptance, and use of digital tools, like QR codes.

WHY DIGITAL?

- **Complements on-pack information**
- **Uses little space**
- **Quickly adaptable as updates to the information can be made online**
- **Can reduce packaging waste, encourage resource efficiency, and decrease production costs**
- **Can provide product information in a targeted and personalised way**
- **Can boost the competitiveness of the food and drink industry, by attracting additional investment and bolstering innovation**

82% of consumers think QR codes are useful and help them make decisions ¹

Digital adoption in Europe jumped from **81% to 95%** after the COVID-19 pandemic ²

8 out of 10 consumers are used to scanning QR codes to acquire product information ³

THE CASE FOR A HARMONISED POLICY ON DIGITAL LABELLING

1 Europe leading the world

The market in digital labelling is growing and changing at pace. By proposing a harmonised and coherent policy on digital labelling, European policymakers can get in front of global market events and wrestle back control of how digital labelling develops in Europe.

By being a first-mover globally on this issue, Europe also stands to set the standards for markets across the world.

2 Patching the cracks in the Single Market

The EU has the mandate to ensure that enterprises are not burdened by an excess of divergent standards across Member States but instead are assured by a single European policy.

Presenting a harmonised approach to digital labelling will provide predictability and legal certainty for manufacturers to develop digital labels to align with one European standard, thus reducing the inefficiencies and waste of having to prepare packaging for multiple national label regimes.

3 Crisis response

Digital labelling will also allow the food and drink sector to respond quickly to developments in emergency situations. It offers great flexibility and high-pace adaptability during a crisis.

4 Delivering transparency & trust

Already a number of brands and public authorities are using digital labelling to share information with consumers and citizens. By developing a harmonised approach, the EU would ensure that consumers can rely on information delivered through digital means that abide by harmonised principles on accuracy, transparency, reliability, and fairness.

5 Fostering innovation & competitiveness

A harmonised framework for digital labelling, which is not prescriptive about the technology used, could open the space for innovations and new technologies to be developed.

Bringing to life a bold, future-proof regulatory approach to digital labelling would further unlock the global competitiveness of the food and drink industry in the market race for consumer choice.

ABOUT FOODDRINKEUROPE

FoodDrinkEurope represents Europe's food and drink industry, Europe's largest manufacturing sector in terms of turnover, employment and value added.

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For more information see our **Green Paper** and **State-of-Play report**



¹ Rotsios, K. et al. (2022)
² McKinsey survey (2020)
³ Appinio survey (2022)