



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Your ref: DA/JK/025  
Our ref: MC2022/21139/NM

18 November 2022

Dear Diane,

Thank you for your letter of 12 October to Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP on behalf of your constituents about the Bread and Flour Regulations 1988. Your letter has been passed to Defra and I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

As your constituents have mentioned, Defra, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and Wales, Food Standards Scotland, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments, have been conducting jointly a review of The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and The Bread and Flour (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1998 to make sure the regulations are fit for purpose and support British industry while protecting consumers.

To assist the review, Defra convened a technical working group made up of a wide range of relevant partners, including the Real Bread Campaign, to help identify and explore the potential for additional exemptions and to review other regulatory issues. We have now launched a joint United Kingdom (UK) wide consultation on proposals to update the Bread and Flour Regulations that set out to make sure the regulations lead to improved public health, support industry in the UK, assist enforcement authorities and protect consumers.

It is essential that consumers have trust in the food they eat, and we recognise the important role labelling and quality standards can play, including for bread. Existing food labelling rules and other requirements on the control of additives in food production are in place to make sure that food is produced safely and labelled effectively to enable consumers to make informed choices on the food they buy and consume.

While the Government is always looking for ways to improve our regulations, legislative intervention is just one option and should be restricted to areas where there is clear market failure. Bakers, including those producing sourdough products, can effectively market their products on their own merits within the rules as they stand, and legislation supports such marketing so long as it is not misleading. The technical stakeholder group considered the need for a legal definition of sourdough to be introduced into the Bread and Flour Regulations. There were divergent views on the matter, however the group broadly agreed that a regulatory approach was not needed.

The Government is keen to avoid creating further regulatory barriers in trade at this time. The Government is therefore supportive of non-regulatory measures and encourages further work on the joint industry code of practice that could help achieve a better mutual understanding in this area and help address the technical differences around the production of sourdough.

Industry codes of practice have been created for other specialised products such as basmati rice. These codes provide a resource for both producers and food enforcement authorities that can help make sure that consumer expectations are met and that the existing legal requirement that food labels do not mislead consumers is being upheld. Further development of a code of practice for sourdough was supported by several members from the bread and flour technical working group.

The scope of the public consultation concerns potential changes to The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and The Bread and Flour (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1998 only. These regulations cover specific compositional and labelling requirements for bread and flour on top of wider labelling rules that apply to food more generally.

While points raised by the Real Bread Campaign regarding the use of other terms including “traditional”, “artisan”, “wholegrain” and “freshly made” in the marketing of foods were discussed by the technical working group, it was recognised these are more broadly applicable to other foods and baked goods with the Bread and Flour Regulations therefore not a suitable instrument to update requirements around the use of these terms. The same can be said for requirements relating to processing aids in foods, hence these points are not within scope of this consultation exercise. Labelling of baked goods and unwrapped products more widely is covered by general food labelling legislation. The Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers, and the Government Food Strategy sets out work that we will be taking forward on consumer information and transparency.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Spencer'.

**Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP**