

IF IN DOUBT
LOOK FOR THE
QUALITY STANDARD MARK



NO MORE PORKIES

Guide to Labelling



A GUIDE TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING

Country of origin labels, which show where meat was born, raised and slaughtered, are compulsory under EU law for beef and veal. Under current rules this is not true for pork and pork products such as bacon, ham, sausages and pork pies.

For fresh pork, such as chops, steak or roasting joints, *country of origin* labelling is usually very clear. But this is not the case for processed pork products such as sausages, ham, bacon and pork pies, making it far harder to identify where the meat actually comes from. It is often only by reading the small print on the back of the packet that shoppers can tell the country of origin of a product and in some cases even this is not possible.

As the UK currently has higher legal standards for animal welfare on pig farms than most other EU countries, this makes it hard for shoppers to choose higher welfare products. And pork from animals reared abroad, often in conditions that are illegal in the UK, can be brought to the UK for processing and packaging and then be legally labelled as British.

This short guide is designed to cut through the often confusing information on pack labels which identify the country of origin of the pork, bacon, sausages, ham and pork pies.

SUPPORT FOR CLEARER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING

Support for clearer *country of origin* labelling is growing.

The UK Food Standards Agency has long campaigned for clear labelling and the UK Government recently set up the Pig Task Force, to look at a number of issues including clearer labelling. The Conservative Party recently started its own campaign for clearer labelling and the EU has announced that it would like to see far clearer *country of origin* labelling on food products.

But in the meantime, *country of origin* labelling remains confusing on many processed pork products.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING – WHAT SHOPPERS THINK

- 80% of people agree that all food products should be clearly labelled with the country of origin
- 63% agree that labels are currently confusing, making it hard to see exactly where a product has been produced
- 91% of people agree that labelling products that contained imported pork as "British" is misleading

Survey of 2,000 adults conducted by YouGov for BPEX – March 2009

HOW TO READ A PROCESSED PORK LABEL

Often simply looking at the front of the pack is not enough.

Even if the name of a country is given on the pack it does not mean that the product inside has come from animals reared in that country. Use of flags can be misleading too. If a pack carries the Union Jack, this does not guarantee the meat came from pigs reared in the UK. Likewise, the flag of another country does not guarantee this was where the pigs were reared.

Often you need to turn to the back of the pack to find out the country of origin of the pork.

The list of ingredients is a good place to start, as this may well contain information about the origin of the pork in the product. For example it may say:

"British Pork" if the pork is from pigs reared in Britain, or "Danish Pork" if the pigs were reared in Denmark. Alternatively it may say "EU Pork", which will mean that the pork is from pigs reared in another EU country.

The label may also use terms such as "made in" or "produced in". These can often be misleading:

"MADE IN"

If you see this label without any other indication of origin, it is likely that the product has been processed in that country but is made from pork imported from another country

"PRODUCED IN"

If you see this label without any other indication of origin, it is most likely that the product is processed and packed in that country from imported pork. 'Produced in' labels may also include other terms and information, which can be misleading

HEALTH MARKING

Every pack of food carries what is known as a 'health mark'. This will often say 'UK EC' and simply indicates that the food was last processed in the UK and meets EC requirements. It does not mean the pigs were reared in the UK

"WILTSHIRE CURED" HAM

This does not mean the ham comes from Wiltshire. Wiltshire Cure is a specialist way of curing pork and the pork from which the ham or bacon was made could come from any country in the EU



THE QUALITY STANDARD MARK

One way to be sure that you are buying pork, bacon, sausages and ham produced to UK welfare standards is to look for the Quality Standard Mark.

BPEX operates an independently audited quality assurance scheme for pig meat, which covers all aspects of production, including animal welfare from birth to slaughter. Many pork, gammon, bacon, ham and sausages produced under this scheme carry the distinctive Quality Standard Mark (QSM) on the pack.



CHECKLIST

DO...

Spend a little time reading the label carefully if you want to ensure the product meets higher welfare standards



Look for the Quality Standard Mark for assurance that the product meets UK welfare standards



Ask retailers for information if you are still unsure



DON'T...

Rely on the front of the pack – always turn it over for more information



Assume that the use of a country name or even a flag guarantees the product is from that country



Assume that "Made in" or "Produced in" indicates that the pork comes from the country mentioned



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