businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Weighing and measuring fruit and vegetables

In the guide

Weights and measures requirements
- Weighing
- Prepacked goods and the average-quantity system

Exemptions to the requirements
- Soft fruits and mushrooms
- Countable produce
- Large potatoes
- Bunched products
- Seasonal bag-and-box schemes etc
- Small and large quantities

Price marking requirements
Food labelling
- Differences between food law and metrology law

Trading Standards
In this update
Key legislation

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

There are a number of legal requirements that you need to be aware of when selling fruit and vegetables by weight (whether at the request of customers or prepacked ready for sale), which include weighing equipment construction and quantity price marking. For example, using a 'Government stamped' scale (as they are known), pricing and selling in metric quantities, and marking prepacked goods with the weight of the product.

Customers must be informed of the weight before paying for and receiving their goods. In general, all foods, whether sold prepacked or non-prepacked, must be priced in a manner that can be seen by customers without them having to ask.

There are also specific requirements relating to 'bag and box' or 'seasonal selection' schemes where a

variety of different items are placed together in a container for a sale or delivery to customers.

Weights and measures requirements

Weights and measures legislation applies to the sale of fresh fruit and vegetables as harvested, cleaned, trimmed or divided into parts, and includes shelled peas and cooked beetroot.

In general, fresh fruit and vegetables must be sold by the kilogram, subject to some exemptions, which are detailed below.

Prepacked fruit and vegetables must have the net weight of the product marked on the container.

Non-prepacked items (food sold loose or packaged at the request of the consumer), including products cut or selected from a larger bulk as requested by the customer, must be sold either by net weight or by gross weight.

Items may only be sold by gross weight if the weight of the bag, wrapper or container in which the product is served is not greater than that allowed for in table A below.

Note:

- **net weight** means the weight of the goods alone without the bag, wrapper or container
- **gross weight** means the weight of the goods plus the weight of any bag, wrapper or container
- **tare weight** means the weight of any bag, wrapper or container (referred to as 'Permitted weight of container' in the tables below)

Gross weight	Permitted weight of container
Up to 500 g	5 g
More than 500 g	A weight at the rate of 10 g per kg of the gross weight

Gross weight	Permitted weight of container
Up to 250 g	A weight at the rate of 120 g per kg of the gross weight
Between 250 g and 1 kg	A weight at the rate of 100 g per kg of the gross weight
Between 1 kg and 3 kg	A weight at the rate of 90 g per kg of the gross weight
More than 3 kg	A weight at the rate of 60 g per kg of the gross weight

Weighing

Scales that are used must be accurate and of an approved construction for retail sale use, and have certain required markings and stamps on them. See 'Weighing equipment for legal use' for more information.

The customer must be informed of the weight of the product and the price before paying for it. This can be done by:

- weighing the product in front of the customer so that they have a clear view of the weight indication on the scales
- marking the weight on the bag, wrapper or container

- marking the weight on a separate ticket or till receipt

Prepacked goods and the average-quantity system

If your business also prepares large quantities of prepacked products in set quantities - for example, 5 kg packs of potatoes - you may wish to take advantage of packing them using the average-quantity system, which makes allowances for small variations in package weights.

For more information on this system, please see '[Packaged goods: average quantity]'. You may also wish to seek specific advice from your local Trading Standards service.

Exemptions to the requirements

Soft fruits and mushrooms

When sold in a container (in small containers such as punnets, for example) that complies with the requirements of table B above, soft fruits and mushrooms may be sold either by net weight or by gross weight, as long as the weight is made known to the customer prior to purchase. This can be done by means of a notice stating the weight of each container of produce, or by placing each container on a scale in the view of the customer so they can see the weight for themselves.

Countable produce

Countable produce, as listed below, may be sold by number instead of complying with the general requirements given above:

- apples
- apricots
- artichokes (globe)
- aubergines
- avocados
- bananas
- beetroots (including cooked)
- cabbage
- capsicum
- cauliflower
- celery
- coconuts
- corn on the cob
- cucumber
- fennel
- figs (fresh)
- garlic
- grapefruit
- guavas
- kiwi fruit
- kohlrabi

- lemons
- lettuce
- limes
- mangoes
- marrows
- melons
- nectarines
- onions (other than spring)
- oranges
- passion fruit
- pawpaw
- peaches
- pears
- pineapple
- plums
- pomegranates
- pomelo
- pumpkins
- radishes
- shaddock
- soft citrus fruits
- tomatoes
- ugli

If not marked with the net weight, prepacks of countable produce must be marked with the number of items in the container, except for prepacks containing up to eight items where all the items can clearly be seen and counted.

Large potatoes

Prepacks containing large potatoes, each weighing over 175 g, may be sold by number providing that the container is labelled with the number of potatoes it contains and a statement that they are all heavier than a particular stated weight.

Bunched products

The following items may be sold by the bunch instead of complying with the general requirements given above:

- asparagus
- beetroots
- carrots
- chives
- endives
- garlic
- mint
- mustard and cress
- onions (including spring)
- parsley

- radishes
- salad cress
- turnips
- watercress

Seasonal bag-and-box schemes etc

The above requirements for selling by weight do not apply where selections of three or more items of fresh fruits or vegetables are put in a container ready for sale or for delivery to customers. Nor do they apply where fresh fruit and vegetable items are packed together with potatoes or other items such as cheese, meat, bread, etc.

Small and large quantities

Fresh fruit and vegetables sold in quantities of less than 5 g or more than 5 kg are exempt from the above requirements to sell by weight or number and to make the quantity known to the customer. This exemption does not apply to potatoes.

Price marking requirements

In general, all foods must have their price displayed and include VAT where applicable.

The price must be displayed on or near the product, be unambiguous and easily read by customers without them having to ask for assistance.

For most non-prepacked items (food sold loose or packaged at the request of the consumer), or for products where the customer requests a particular quantity, the unit price per kilogram must be indicated on or near the goods or on a price list. You may also display a price per pound, but this must not be more prominent than the metric kilogram price. For more expensive products you may also assist customers with an additional price per 100 g where this might give a more meaningful indication of the price the customer will have to pay.

For fruit and veg counters in shops with a sales area of more than 280 m^2, the unit price of prepacked products must also be displayed on or near the goods - for example, on a shelf edge ticket or a price list.

However, there are exceptions. The main ones are as follows:

- products near their expiry date and sold at a reduced price
- an assortment of different items sold as a single pack
- products that are not required to be sold by weight - for example, countable produce or produce allowed to be sold by the bunch
- any product where the unit price is identical to the selling price

The unit price must be in metric, generally the price per kilogram. The unit price per pound may also be given in addition to the metric marking, but must be given less prominence.

For more information on pricing generally, see 'Providing price information'.

Food labelling

There are a number of food labelling requirements that you will also need to comply with when selling these products. For more information, see Business Companion's 'Food and drink' section.

Differences between food law and metrology law

In food law, alongside prepacked and non-prepacked, there is a third type of process, which is referred to as 'prepacked for direct sale' (PPDS). It does not have a strict legal definition, but it means food that is placed into packaging (prepacked) before being offered for sale and sold / offered for sale or supply from the premises on which it was packed, or from a mobile stall or vehicle being operated by the business. PPDS was introduced to food law to require businesses to add more detail to PPDS food labelling, particularly related to allergens.

Something that is PPDS in food law is likely to be prepacked in metrology law.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Information added to help business understand how food law and metrology law relate to each other.

Last reviewed / updated: November 2025

Key legislation

- Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Cheese, Fish, Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Meat and Poultry) Order 1984
- Weights and Measures (Miscellaneous Foods) Order 1988
- Price Marking Order 2004

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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