

Factsheet: Quick Frozen Foodstuffs Regulations 2007



Who should read this?

These rules apply to all businesses that make, transport (including by rail), store or sell quick frozen foodstuffs (QFF). The rules apply to QFF only if they are labelled as 'quick-frozen' (which is optional). They do not apply to ice cream or edible ice.

Main requirements

New rules:

- All **NEW** temperature monitoring instruments used in the transport, warehousing and storage of QFF must comply with European standards (EN12830, EN13485 and EN13486) from 1 January 2006.
- Instruments installed before 1 January 2006 that complied with previous rules can be used until 31 December 2009. All instruments must meet European standards from 1 January 2010.
- The temperature-monitoring rules apply to QFF transported by rail from 1 January 2006.
- Businesses must keep all relevant documents showing that instruments meet the relevant European standard(s).

Existing rules:

- QFF must be made from food that is sound, genuine and of merchantable quality that is fit for human consumption.
- The food must be frozen and have crossed the zone of maximum crystallisation as rapidly as possible for that type of product.
- Only air, nitrogen or carbon dioxide may be used as the cryogenic medium in contact with the food.
- The temperature on thermal stabilization must be -18°C or colder. This temperature must be maintained except for brief periods during transport (including local distribution) where it may reach -15°C, or when in retail display cabinets where it may reach -12°C.
- The food must be pre-packed to prevent contamination and dehydration. The packaging must remain until the food is placed on the market, for example quick frozen fish must be kept in its packaging until displayed for sale.
- Businesses must date temperature recordings and store these for at least one year or longer, depending on the nature and shelf-life of the QFF.

Exemptions

Exemptions are still in place for air temperature monitoring when QFF is in retail display cabinets and during local distribution. In these cases at least one easily visible thermometer must be used to measure the air temperature. For **OPEN** retail display cabinets, the maximum load level line must be clearly marked and the thermometer must measure the air temperature at this line at the air return side. The cabinet should not be filled above the line.

The exemption for cold store facilities of less than 10m³ for stock in retail outlets has also been continued. In such cases, rules allow the air temperature to be measured by one easily visible thermometer.

Where the above exemptions apply, there is no requirement to keep temperature records.

Labelling

QFF to be marketed as such to the ultimate consumer or to a caterer must have on the label, in addition to normal labelling requirements:

- 'Quick frozen'.
- The date of minimum durability – a 'best before' date.
- The maximum advisable storage time.
- The temperature or the equipment that should be used to store it.
- A batch or lot mark.
- Wording such as 'do not refreeze after defrosting'.

QFF for further processing must have on the label:

- 'Quick frozen'.
- A batch or lot mark.
- The name (or business name) and address of the manufacturer or packer, or a seller in the EU.

Background

The Quick Frozen Foodstuffs Regulations 2007¹ replace the Quick Frozen Foodstuffs Regulations 1990. Their purpose is to protect the quality of QFF. Other legislation deals with safety, wider labelling and commodity specific requirements. These rules are not covered here.

Many existing rules on QFF are continued, including rules for enforcers about sampling and temperature analysis. New are enforcement and penalty provisions for rules about temperature monitoring instruments, which are set out in EC Regulation 37/2005².

Rules for enforcement officers

If there are reasonable grounds to believe that QFF has not been kept at the right temperatures, the QFF and temperatures must be further inspected. The specific procedures for this are included in the Food Law Code of Practice and associated Practice Guidance for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Further information

For more details contact:

Standards and Sustainability Branch

Food Standards Agency

Tel: 020 7276 8154

This factsheet is also available on the Agency's website at:

food.gov.uk/aboutus/publications/labpublications/

1 The Quick-frozen Foodstuffs (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007 No. 191), ISBN: 978-0-11-075716-2; The Quick-frozen Foodstuffs Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (SSI 2007 No.106), ISBN: 978-0-11-071829-3; The Quick-frozen Foodstuffs (Wales) Regulations 2007 (WSI 2007 No.389 (W.40)), ISBN: 0-11-091505-4; The Quick-Frozen Foodstuffs (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (SR 2007 No.110), ISBN: 978-0-337-96884-6. (Full Regulations are available from: www.opsi.gov.uk)

2 Commission Regulation (EC) No 37/2005, OJ L 10/18-19, 13.1.2005.