

## Criteria for allergy-friendly food products

### BACKGROUND

Allergies have many triggers. Common triggers are foods that may contain various allergens. For people with food allergies, it is therefore especially important that the product ingredients are listed in detail and that the legally imposed limits are observed.

Some people with allergies only have to avoid individual allergens, such as celery or milk. For these people, the food is ideally labelled as “free from” the particular allergen to which they react. For other people with allergies, several allergens may be problematic.. This is why they require comprehensive labelling of the ingredients on the product.

The ECARF Seal of Quality offers both allergy groups practical specifications on allergy-friendly foods, either with the label “free from” or according to “extended labelling” criteria.

While it is important to avoid allergenic substances in the food itself, it must also be ensured that the given foods have not been unintentionally exposed to allergens upstream in the production process.

The ECARF Seal of Quality certifies foods that are produced with proven, effective allergen management.

#### **Allergen management includes:**

- Production
- Declaration
- Control

### 1. PRODUCTION

Foreign substances such as allergens can also enter food products unintentionally. This may occur when raw ingredients already contain undeclared ingredients or when various raw ingredients are transported together, for example.

Allergenic contamination can also occur if the same production equipment is used for different foods in the manufacturing process, such as in the production of chocolate with and without nuts.

#### **Unintentional allergenic contamination can be prevented through effective allergen management. This includes:**

- monitoring the raw ingredients
- monitoring the food manufacturing process
- structured employee training

## 2. LABELLING

The law requires the declaration of 14 allergens if they are used as ingredients in the recipe and are not unintentionally present in the food. Food products certified with the ECARF Seal of Quality are either “free from” any of the 14 allergens subject to declaration or meet the extended labelling requirements:

### 2.1. “Free from”

The consumer-friendly “free from” label allows a consumer to see at a glance whether a specific allergen of concern to him or her is not included in the product. Manufacturers of foods bearing the ECARF Seal of Quality guarantee that the product does not contain individually specified allergens.

#### **The Manufacturers ...**

- demonstrate that these selected allergens are not detectable and
- clearly list these allergens on the product packaging and declare the product as “free from” these substances.

### 2.2. Extended labelling

Food manufacturers list the ingredients of the food product with ingredient labelling that provides as much detail as possible. The labelling on the product label should also include meaningful information on the possible presence of unintentional traces of allergens, and these should always be below a concentration of 0.5 mg per 100 g. In order to provide the consumer with reliable information, the product must note on the label that it may still contain allergens in trace amounts but that these are present at a very low concentration.

#### **The following is then indicated in the list of ingredients:**

After listing the ingredients, the following declaration is made: “May also contain traces of the following allergens (list here, e.g. hazelnut). However, our quality management ensures that they are limited to less than 0.5 mg of protein per 100 g of the product. If you have any further questions, please contact our consumer service (contact details).”

#### **Manufacturers of food certified with the ECARF Seal of Quality ...**

- are not only required by law to list the ingredients, but also
- indicate other possible allergenic ingredients (“Traces”) in addition to the legally required declaration of allergenic ingredients.

## 3. CONTROL

In order to prevent allergenic contamination, the allergen content of the final products is regularly monitored by an independent institute. In general, this monitoring is carried out at least twice a year or in accordance with the product type and production process or in the event of any changes made to the product or production process.

## 4. DISCLAIMER

In many cases, manufacturers are able to reliably detect even very small quantities of substances in individual products, or even label them “free from”. However, this is not an absolute guarantee. Food products that are actually allergen-free may be contaminated at extremely low levels because the chemical detection methods for very small quantities have not yet been optimised in every regard. Minor fluctuations in product quality can therefore only be excluded to the extent permitted by the available chemical and technical detection methods.

## ANNEX: FOOD DECLARATIONS

The following ingredients are declared when used in the formulation of the product:

Legally required declaration of 14 allergens (Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011)	Additional declarations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Cereals containing gluten:</b> wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, Khorasan wheat or their hybrid strains and products made from them</li> <li>▪ <b>Nuts:</b> almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew nut, pecan nut, Brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamia nuts and products made from them</li> <li>▪ <b>Eggs</b> and egg products</li> <li>▪ <b>Peanuts</b> and peanut products</li> <li>▪ <b>Soya</b> and soya products</li> <li>▪ <b>Mustard</b> and mustard products</li> <li>▪ <b>Crustaceans</b> and crustacean products</li> <li>▪ <b>Fish</b> and fish products</li> <li>▪ <b>Milk</b> and dairy products (including lactose)</li> <li>▪ <b>Celery</b> and celery products</li> <li>▪ <b>Sulphur dioxide and sulphites</b> at a concentration higher than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/l, labelled as SO<sub>2</sub></li> <li>▪ <b>Sesame seeds</b> and sesame seed products</li> <li>▪ <b>Lupin</b> and lupin products</li> <li>▪ <b>Molluscs</b> and mollusc products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Spices:</b> anise, caraway, chamomile, coriander, cinnamon, pepper</li> <li>▪ <b>Nightshade plants and vegetables:</b> paprika, tomato, chilli, carrot</li> <li>▪ <b>Fruit:</b> melon, kiwi, mango, banana, apple, pear, cherry, peach, plum, nectarine, apricot, lychee</li> <li>▪ <b>Carrageenan</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Guar gum</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Locust bean gum</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Poppy seeds</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Balsam of Peru</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Millet</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Buckwheat</b></li> </ul>