

Criteria for allergy-friendly grocery stores

Background

Regular shopping often is a problem for people suffering from allergies. Although allergens have to be labeled on food and meals but allergy sufferers often have trouble finding suitable products. The ECARF Seal of Quality is awarded to grocery stores that store special product suited for people suffering from allergies and ease the regular shopping.

The following criteria not only take into account the needs of people suffering from food allergies but also the needs of people suffering from respiratory allergies. They react to airborne allergens in the air, like parts of plants or animal hair.

The ECARF Seal of Quality is awarded to grocery stores that adapted their interior spaces and assortment to the needs of allergy sufferers.

1. Criteria

1.1 Interior spaces

- Avoidance of allergy-causing green plants releasing aeroallergens (in general no blossoming grasses, hazel, birch or olive plants, especially pollinating plants release aeroallergens spread in rooms. Other allergenic plants e.g. Viola or Ficus are also known of but only pose a problem in close contact and thus don't have to be removed from all rooms.)
- Open windows or external monitoring of air conditioners according to manufacturer guidelines and regular filter changes
- A Smoke-free and pet-free environment

1.2 Restaurant

The assortment must be adapted to the needs of allergy sufferers. To this end, competent allergen management must be established and a sufficient range of product alternatives must be made available.

Allergen-Management

Allergens can also end up unintentionally in food, for example, if the raw ingredients contain hidden allergens or the same transport container has been used for allergen-free and allergen-containing raw ingredients. Correct allergen management effectively prevents contamination by allergens. It ensures that

- products are always individually packaged and delivered in separate transport containers; this should be specified when ordering the products.
- the kitchen staff is trained in the purchase and storage of products and in responding to queries from customers.

Assortment

The assortment is set to the needs of allergy sufferers and adequate product alternatives are available, e.g.:

- Eggless durum wheat pasta or noodles, semolina, rice, potatoes (not pre-peeled)
- Soya milk
- Lactose-free milk
- Dairy-free, eggless and nut-free desserts
- Gluten-free bread
- Nut-free, peanut-free and almond-free muesli and bread
- Celery and celery products
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at a concentration greater than 10 mg/kg or 10mg/l specified as SO₂
- Sesame seeds and sesame seed products
- Lupin and lupin products
- Molluscs and mollusc products

1.3 Training

As part of the certification, employees receive training on how to deal with guests who have allergies.

1.4 Validity

ECARF certification is valid for two years. Access must be granted for the ECARF audit, which may be conducted without prior notice at any time within the validity period.

The inspection is carried out by in-house ECARF auditors and authorised ECARF partners.

1.5 External Presentation of the ECARF Seal of Quality

The grocery store shall ensure that the ECARF Seal is visible on the local website, in accordance with the terms and conditions of use.

The ECARF Seal may only be used in compliance with the applicable design guidelines.

Notices can be created according to the shop's corporate design, but must include the ECARF Seal of Quality logo.

ECARF Seal of Quality

Notices should be made visible to guests in the countries language and English in the form of a display board or stand as well as on the shop's website.

Notices in the shop

"In case you suffer from allergies please contact our staff, we are happy to help".

Next to these notices the ECARF Seal of Quality logo is placed.



2. Quality Control and Complaint Management

The business has established a functional system of quality control that responds effectively to consumer complaints. The system ensures the following:

- The business contact details, such as the address, telephone number and/or email address, are clearly visible on the product packaging;
- Consumer complaints are handled and followed up in an appropriate manner by qualified and experienced personnel of the business;
- The assessment of consumer complaints and, if applicable, any inferred areas of improvement are reapplied to product quality and safety. The business agrees to make this data available to ECARF on an ongoing basis.