

## **Coalition of Companies Provides Consumers with Clarity on Expiry Dates**

**Veghel, 18 June 2024 – Manufacturers and supermarkets, including Unilever, FrieslandCampina, Albert Heijn, Lidl, Jumbo, Dirk, Dekamarkt, De Smaakspecialist, Ebro, Velder, and Enrico Foods, are collectively taking extensive measures to clarify the labelling of food products' expiry dates. By providing more explicit information on packaging about how consumers should handle these dates, they aim to make further progress in reducing food waste among consumers. These companies have joined the Date Labelling Coalition, initiated by the foundation Food Waste Free United, FNLI, and Too Good To Go, endorsed by CBL and The Netherlands Nutrition Centre, launched at the conference Towards Halving Food Waste in Europe.**

In the Netherlands, 2 billion kilos of good food are wasted each year, with 24-38% of this waste occurring at the consumer level. A real waste particularly because all the energy required to grow, produce, package, and transport the food is already embedded in the product. 10% of food waste at home is due to confusion over different use-by dates, equating to around 60 million kilos of good food, 115 million meals, or 175 million kg of CO2 emissions per year. There is significant potential for improvement here. Toine Timmermans, director of Food Waste Free United, stated: "After years of reducing food waste by consumers, this downward trend has stagnated. More is needed to ensure that food waste is halved by 2030 according to SDG12.3. This coalition is an important and logical step in the right direction. We hope that more companies will join so that consumers do not unnecessarily waste valuable food at home."

Anita Scholte op Reimer of Albert Heijn said, 'At Albert Heijn, we do a lot to prevent food waste. With various initiatives, we reduced 3.6 million kilograms of food waste in 2023. By joining the Date Labelling Coalition, we offer an additional opportunity to prevent even more food waste.'

### **Clearer Distinction Between Best Before and Use By Dates**

Members of the Date Labelling Coalition aim to better inform consumers about the difference between Best Before (THT) and Use By (TGT) dates and how to manage them. For many years research<sup>1</sup> has shown that less than half of the Dutch population understands the difference and can explain it correctly. The Coalition plans to address this by, amongst other things, communicating more clearly on packaging to prevent unnecessary food disposal. After the Best Before date, the quality, such as taste, smell, or colour, may deteriorate. However, it can still be safely consumed, which consumers can determine by looking, smelling, or tasting. This is in contrast to the Use By date, which actually is the last day on which you can still safely use the product.

### **From Campaign to Packaging**

In 2020, a campaign by Food Waste Free United was started to explain the difference between the expiration dates and how to act. Research has shown that more clarity on packaging gives consumers more confidence to consume products after the Best Before date. Additionally, it is important to regularly remind consumers of this desired behaviour to increase the likelihood of implementation. The members of the Date Labelling Coalition are now taking on this responsibility. The coalition partners will enhance the national campaign by also communicating through their own media platforms and will introduce the look-smell-taste icon (on Best Before products) and hand icon (on Use By products) on at least 50% of their packaging.

---

<sup>1</sup> Janssen et al., 2019-2020; Toma et al. 2020; EU, 2018; Zeinstra et al. 2021

### **Best Before Date Not Sacred**

Coalition members view the Best Before date as a guideline. Deborah van der Zee-Denekamp of Unilever stated, " Food is for eating. We want people to enjoy our products and not waste them unnecessarily. Many of our products are also good after the Best Before Date. We want to make it clear to consumers that they can use our products safely and can easily judge for themselves whether they still taste good after the Best Before Date, by looking, smelling and tasting."

Even refrigerated products can often be consumed past the Best Before date. Bob Mulder from FrieslandCampina noted, "Thanks to the latest techniques in dairy packaging, milk and yoghurt often remain good longer than expected, even after the Best Before date. By looking, smelling, and tasting, the consumers can judge whether it is still suitable for consumption. I do this at home too. Therefore, within six months, all our Campina products will feature the look-smell-taste logo<sup>2</sup>."

### **No Best Before Date on Certain Products**

Certain products do not require a best before date, such as salt, honey, and vinegar<sup>3</sup>. However, these dates are still often on these products. The coalition partners will remove these dates and work with Food Waste Free United to expand the list of exempt products.

### **The Netherlands Leading the Way**

Toine Timmermans: "At the Towards Halving Food Waste in Europe conference, we saw that the network model we developed in the Netherlands to tackle food waste is seen as an inspiring example. The Netherlands wants to take a leading position to show that you can reduce food waste by taking responsibility as food industry."

---

#### **Editor's note:**

#### **About Food Waste Free United**

[Food Waste Free United](#) constitutes the definitive movement that brings together and accelerates all major initiatives and expertise for a waste-free Netherlands. Companies from the entire chain, governments and social organisations are working together towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 to reduce food loss and waste by half by 2030 compared to 2015.

Organisations supporting the foundation are: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, Province of North Brabant, the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, Wageningen University & Research and the municipality of Meierijstad.

---

<sup>2</sup> These can be the general icons of Food Waste Free United, or those of Too Good To Go

<sup>3</sup> as laid down in annex X of VO EU 1169/2011