SGF/IRMA Guideline for package labelling (IRMA/GfPL)

Preliminary note

The labelling of drums of fruit and vegetable juices, juice concentrates, purees and puree concentrates has often been a source of confusion in the past. The fact that no internationally recognised standards were available at the time prompted SGF to set up a working group, which drew up the SGF/IRMA Code of Labelling (CoL) in 2003.

With the revision of our rules of the Voluntary Control System (VCS), the CoL became a guidance document.

20 years after the introduction of the CoL, SGF has updated the recommendations and reviewed the individual points. This new guidance document has now been adapted to the legal conditions that have been harmonised in the meantime and to industrial practice.

1. Background

The most basic function of a label is to inform its potential users. In what length does the label need to fulfil its informative role was in earlier times left for manufacturers to decide. In the narrowest scenario, the label should allow the traceability of the traded good. Looking at the issue at hand from user's point of view, procuring goods with ample of different label designs, each with their own style of lot number, batch number, product number, date code, factory number can be bewildering.

Therefore, it was ascertained that the minimum information that should be recorded for traceability purposes was often not clear. Clarity of transmitted information is also important for documentation i.e., connecting several documents accompanying a delivery with the traceability of the batch.

2. Scope

Our guidance is applicable to labelling and documentation used to identify raw materials within the fruit juice industry. That means that not only every primary container of the raw material must have a label as a source of information for the end user (company processing the good), but it must be delivered with batch-specific accompanying documentation. These can be delivery notes, and, above all, the specification of the goods agreed by both parties at the time of contracting.

It must be pointed out that our guidance document is only applicable for semi-finished goods. This applies to drums, cannisters, aseptic bags, etc., traded in the B2B sector. In the finished goods sector, there are already numerous legislations present, eliminating a need for such a guideline.

3. Fields

As a minimum, all the following fields should be present on ONE label:

Producer
Item number
Product
Description of the product
Specific Information
Ingredients
Country of Origin
Brix (refr.)
Titratable Acidity (pH 8.1, calc. as citric acid)
Traceability Information
Drum number
Produced on / Filled on
Best before/storage condition
Net Weight
Bar /QR Code

The fields should be identified using only these specified field names. All the fields should contain information. If, for example, a product does not have an Item Number, the "Item Number" field should contain the words NOT APPLICABLE or N/A. It should not be left blank.

3.1. Producer: The name of the company that manufactured or blended the product. It should not be the name of an agent or other third party acting on behalf of the manufacturer.

3.2. Item Number: The item number of the product as printed by the manufacturer must be in agreement with the customer and conform to the agreed specification.

3.3. Product: Designation of the foodstuff, legal name (e.g., "apple juice concentrate") or (if necessary: customary name (e.g., "comminute orange juice") or descriptive designation (e.g., "Base for an orange juice drink with sweeteners").

3.4. Description of the Product: for example:

- frozen, chilled, aseptic
- clear, cloudy, pulpy
- preserved, acidified, aroma added, SO_2 added

If more than two fruit/vegetable are present, then the word "multi" (or any similar wording) can form part of the description.

3.5. Specific Information: Type of farming, religious food regulations, certain types of sustainable agriculture; all information with special certifications as Kosher, Halal, Organic (inspection body number), Demeter, Rainforest Alliance, etc.

3.6. Ingredients: All ingredients a product is composed of, shall be named in descending order. If raw materials are value defining for this product, the percentage of the amount must be indicated. Any material added to the product that is listed as an additive in:

- Reg. 2001/112/EC relating to fruit juices and certain similar products intended for human consumption,
- Council Directive Directive 89/107/EEC and 95/2/EC on food additives,
- Council Directive 94/35/EC on colors in foodstuffs,
- Council Directive 88/388/EEC on flavourings in foods,
- Council Directive 94/36/EC on sweeteners in foods

and any subsequent amendments thereto.

This field should be used to identify additions to authentic fruit juices as defined in the AIJN Code of Practice. It is not applicable to products such as compounds and bases, e.g., it is not intended to record a list of ingredients in these types of products. Extensive ingredient lists which are not printed on the label, must be part of the agreed specification which is linked over the item number.

3.7. Country of Origin: Name of the country where the product was manufactured or blended.

3.8. Brix (refr.): It is understood that "Brix (refr.)" always means the uncorrected Brix. If the corrected Brix is plotted on the label, the field should be labelled as "Brix (corr.)". The Brix correction for acidity should be carried out according to IFU method No. 8 ("Soluble Solids").

3.9. Titratable acidity (pH 8.1, calc. as citric acid). Additional information e.g., in GPL may be printed as well.

3.10. Traceability Information: Any combination of letters and/or number(s) that identifies the specific product and batch. In the event of a problem, the data in this field will provide all the information that the manufacturer needs from the user to fully trace the specific product. The traceability data – item number plus batch number/lot number etc. should be agreed in the specification and be included in the delivery papers.

3.11. Drum Number: consecutive numbers of filled vessels. To narrow down the problem if a complaint is received.

3.12. Produced on / Filled on – Format: dd/mm/yyyy, the date on which the material was produced and/or the date the product was filled into the container.

3.13. Best before / storage condition: Format: dd/mm/yyyy, plus the conditions the storage is recommended e.g.: chilled at x °C, frozen at °C, ambient (Please print the recommended temperature in ° C).

3.14. Net Weight or Net Quantity: This field must include the units of measure, kg or L etc (please use the metric system to indicate the weight or quantity).

3.15. Bar Code: Format as agreed in the specification.

4. General label properties

4.1. Legibility: Labels should have clear and easily readable text, including product names, batch numbers, manufacturing dates, and any other relevant information. The font size, style, and colour should be chosen to ensure maximum legibility, even in varying lighting conditions or from a distance.
For the dimensions of the label, we recommend a maximum size of 148 mm x 219 mm.

4.2. Durability: Drum labels should be durable and able to withstand the environmental conditions typically encountered in the food industry, including moisture, temperature variations, and exposure to chemicals or cleaning agents. They should remain intact and legible throughout the product's lifecycle.

4.3. Material Safety: Labels used on food drums must comply with food safety regulations. The materials used should be non-toxic, food-grade, and safe for direct or indirect contact with food. They should not contaminate the food or affect its quality, taste, or safety.

4.4. Adhesive Quality: The adhesive used on drum labels should be strong enough to securely attach the label to the drum, even in challenging environments. It should withstand moisture, temperature changes, and handling during transportation and storage, ensuring that the label remains in place and readable.

4.5. Placement of the labels: The label should be applied to the side of the container, not the lid, in a position where it is least likely to become damaged or defaced in transit and handling.

Additional labels should NEVER be placed inside the container. They pose a considerable contamination risk to the contents, especially if automatic drum emptying systems are used.

All the information, both obligatory and additional, should be on one label. Any old label(s) must be completely removed.

Recommendation: Particularly for drums, a 2nd *duplicate* label (containing the same information as the 1st one) should be applied at a position 180 degrees to the first. This ensures that at least one of the labels can be seen (and bar code scanned) whatever the orientation of a group of drums on a pallet.

4.6. Barcode Compatibility: To facilitate inventory management and traceability, drum labels should be compatible with barcode systems. They should have sufficient space and clarity to accommodate barcode printing, ensuring accurate scanning and data capture.

Recommendation: This only applies if a barcode is used.

4.7. Language and Symbols: Labels should use clear and understandable language to convey essential information to users. Additionally, relevant symbols or pictograms, such as

allergen icons or recycling symbols, may be included to enhance comprehension and compliance.

4.8. Branding and Marketing: While ensuring regulatory compliance, drum labels can also serve as a branding and marketing tool. They may include a company logo, product branding, or design elements that align with the overall brand image, helping to create visual appeal and promote brand recognition.

5. Examples

Example 1: Juice

Producer Frutti felici S.R.L, Via Garibaldi 1 Messina	**Item number** P000001
Product **Organic Orange Juice NFC**	**Description of Product** frozen
Specific Information IT BIO 001; EU Agriculture	
Ingredients 100% Orange Juice	
Country of Origin Italy	
Brix (refr.) 11,5	**Titratable Acidity** (pH 8,1; calc. as citric acid) 10 g/l
Traceability Information L20230630	**Drum Number** 7/50
Produced on 01.01.2020	
Best before 01.02.2022	**Storage conditions** recommended -18°C
Net Weight 200 L	**Bar Code**

Example 2: Juice concentrate

Producer Glückliche Früchte GmbH, Merkel Allee 16 Bonn	**Item number** A0815
Product **Apple Juice Conentrate**	**Description of Product** cloudy, acidified, chilled
Specific Information Koscher	
Ingredients 99,5% Apple juice concentrate, antioxidant: ascorbic acid	
Country of Origin Germany	
Brix (refr.) 70	**Titratble Acidity** (pH 8,1; calc. as citric acid) 15 g/l
Traceability Information L202020	**Drum Number** 2/100
Produced on 24.12.2022	
Best before 23.06.2023	**Storage conditions** recommended 2°C - 7°C
Net Weight 270 kg	**Bar Code**

Example 3: Juice base

Producer trái cây hạnh phúc Co Ltd. Uncle Ho Street 5 Nha Trang	**Item number** X4711
Product **Tropical Concentate Mix**	**Description of Product** preserved
Specific Information Fair Trade	
Ingredients Refer to Specification / or / 35% Mango puree concentrate, 25% Orange juice concentrate, 20% Banana puree concentrate, 15% Passion fruit juice concentrate, 4% Lemon juice concentrate, Colour: Beta carotene (E160a); Preservatives: Sodium benzoate (E211), Potassium sorbate (E202)	
Country of Origin Vietnam	
Brix (refr.) 50	**Titratable Acidity** (pH 8,1; calc. as citric acid) 12 g/l
Traceability Information L123456	**Drum Number** 96/150
Produced on 02.09.2000	
Best before 01.09.2001	**Storage conditions recommended** ambient
Net Weight 245 kg	**Bar Code**