CAKES, PASTRY, FISH AND DRIED FRUIT SOLD BY WEIGHT - AN AUDIT BY THE TRADE INSPECTION

* **At the beginning of 2019, the Trade Inspection checked foods sold in bulk.**
* **It questioned almost two thirds of the products.**
* **Most of the reservations concerned labelling.**

**[Warsaw, xx December 2019]** In the first half of 2019, the Trade Inspection inspected food products sold in bulk, by weight and individually. The products mainly included cakes and biscuits, but also bread, fish and dried fruit. The audit was carried out in 164 stores (e.g. confectioneries, bakeries, fish shops), grocery stores and supermarkets. Irregularities were found in 132 of them (80.5%).

The inspectors assessed 1384 lots of product, more than three quarters of which were various kinds of cakes, biscuits and candies. Irregularities were found in over 64 per cent of the inspected products, including almost 60 per cent of cookies and cakes, over 70 per cent of fish or over three quarters of bread. The reservations concerned both labels and quality.

**Laboratory tests**

80 lots of products were inspected at a laboratory. The staff questioned 15 of them (nearly 19%). For example:

* the texture of cakes and biscuits was incorrect, they were rubbery, contained traces of mould or dye not declared in the ingredients or had a different nutritional content than indicated on the packaging,
* dried fruit contained preservatives that were not featured on the ingredients list,
* sweets had a different sugar or salt content than declared,
* fish had an unpleasant smell, disintegrated after cooking and the structure was not uniform.

**Labelling irregularities**

681 lots of products (over 62%) were incorrectly labelled. In that respect, bread was assessed the worst (78% of the inspected lots). The most common irregularities included:

* many products were not labelled at all,
* the list of ingredients was missing or incorrect (including, for example, no list of allergens or full name of ingredients) - this concerned as much as one third of the batches checked,
* the name of the product was missing or misleading (for example, “rum balls”, although no rum was used to produce them, only aroma, “lemon cream-filled cookies”, although there was no lemon among the ingredients, only aroma, “sole fillet” instead of “limanda aspera fillet”),
* the manufacturer's name was missing or the data were incomplete,
* there was no unit weight provided for bread and no indication that “bread was made of deep-frozen dough”,
* for some fish there was no full commercial designation of the fish species (e.g. “cod” instead of “Atlantic cod”), no indication of the production method, no catch area or incorrect information provided.

There were also cases of use of the “home-made” term in labelling of cakes and biscuits, even though they contained preservatives, acidity regulators, emulsifiers and dyes.

**Other irregularities**

The auditors also checked service reliability by making a controlled purchase. Controlled purchases consist of inspectors acting anonymously as consumers and shoppers. It turned out that in 26 outlets the sellers overstated the amount due - they calculated it according to prices higher than indicated on shelves and tags or according to gross weight. In 7 shops, the inspectors found food that was out of date or they could not establish the expiry dates, and in 34 shops there were scales without valid approvals.

As a result of the audit, the Trade Inspection punished 45 entities with fines, and as a result of administrative proceedings, the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK) charged financial penalties on several dozen entrepreneurs. Moreover, the Trade Inspection sent 21 notifications on irregularities to provincial inspectorates of commercial quality of agricultural and food products, 6 notifications to sanitary supervision authorities and 24 to other bodies.

**Consumer!**

* Products sold by weight should be sold by net weight - make sure that you are not paying extra for the weight of the packaging.
* You have the right to know the composition of the product - it should be available at the point of sale, e.g. on a tag or in a catalogue displayed at the shop.
* You have the right to know who the producer is and what their address is.
* In case of glazed fish products sold by weight, the percentage glaze content must be indicated at the point of sale.
* In case of bread, unit weight, list of ingredients and allergens must be indicated.
* Water added as an ingredient must be included among bread ingredients if it exceeds 5% of the weight of the finished product.
* If bread is made of deep-frozen dough, this should also be stated at the point of sale.
* The individual ingredients of compound ingredients must also be mentioned among bread ingredients.
* If an ingredient appears in the name of the product or is emphasised on the label in words or graphics, the contents must be indicated (e.g. rye bread with cranberries 5%).
* If you see any irregularities at a shop, please contact your nearest Provincial Trade Inspectorate.

**Support for consumers:**

Tel. 801 440 220 or 22 290 89 16 - Consumer Helpline
E-mail: porady@dlakonsumentow.pl
Consumer Ombudsmen – in your city or district
Regional Consumer Centres: 22 299 60 90 - organisationdlakonsumenta.pl