

The Lazarus Global Standardized Food Date Labeling Act

A model Act proposed by the Lazarus Council to reduce food waste, increase safe donation, and provide clear, uniform date terminology for consumers and regulators.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of [Nation], as follows:

SECTION 1. TITLE

This Act may be cited as the “Lazarus Global Standardized Food Date Labeling Act.”

SECTION 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

The legislature finds that:

1. Inconsistent and confusing food date labels contribute to unnecessary disposal of safe, edible food and deter donations.
2. A simple, uniform distinction between quality and safety dates improves consumer understanding, reduces waste, and facilitates donation.
3. Clear permission to sell or donate food after a quality date (when otherwise compliant) increases recovery without compromising safety.

Purpose: To establish uniform, consumer-facing date terminology; permit post-quality-date sale and donation; and align national practice with international best practices while minimizing administrative burden.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

- (a) “Consumer-facing date label” means wording intended to communicate date information to end consumers.
- (b) “Quality date” means the manufacturer’s estimate of the period of best quality (not safety).
- (c) “Safety date” means the date after which consumption may present a material safety risk if not maintained under conditions that materially limit bacterial growth, including freezing or other recognized preservation methods.
- (d) “Coded rotation date” means an internal stock-rotation or logistics code not intelligible to consumers.
- (e) “Donated food” means edible food transferred without profit for humanitarian or charitable purposes; reimbursement of reasonable handling, storage, packaging, or transport costs shall not be deemed profit.
- (f) “Competent authority” means the national body responsible for food labeling standards.

SECTION 4. STANDARDIZED CONSUMER-FACING TERMINOLOGY

1. Only ONE of the following consumer-facing date terms may appear on foods intended for retail sale, as applicable:
 - (a) “BEST if used by” (or “Best if frozen by” as applicable) to communicate quality; or
 - (b) “Use by” (or “Use or freeze by” as applicable) to communicate safety.
2. Use of “sell by,” “display until,” or other consumer-facing date phrases is prohibited. 3.

Manufacturers and retailers may use coded rotation dates for inventory management if not intelligible to consumers.

SECTION 5. SALE AND DONATION AFTER QUALITY DATE

1. A product labeled “BEST if used by” may be sold or donated after that date if it otherwise complies with applicable law and shows no signs of spoilage.
2. A product labeled “Use by” may not be sold or donated for consumption after that date unless made safe by freezing or other approved stabilization and relabeled accordingly.

SECTION 6. FLEXIBILITY FOR BULK AND UNLABELED DONATIONS

1. The absence of consumer-facing date labels shall not by itself prohibit donation or defeat safe-harbor protections in Section 5(3) where food is otherwise fit for human consumption at time of donation.
2. For bulk or prepared foods donated outside consumer packaging, reasonable documentation of preparation/holding conditions or freezing date may substitute for a consumer-facing label.

SECTION 7. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

1. The Competent Authority shall support a concise, public education message explaining the two-label standard (quality vs. safety) using existing communication channels.
2. The Lazarus Council may make model public-education materials and retailer signage available for voluntary adoption at <https://LazarusCouncil.com/Guidance> (or successor site).

SECTION 8. EXEMPTIONS AND ALIGNMENT

1. This Act does not alter labeling requirements for categories governed by specific statutes or international codes (e.g., infant formula); those continue to control.
2. The Competent Authority may issue alignment notices to avoid conflicts with food-safety or trade regulations without increasing burden on donors or retailers.

SECTION 9. TRANSITION AND GRACE PERIOD

1. Effective date shall be [18–24 months] from enactment to allow label reprints and inventory turnover.
2. Products manufactured before the effective date may be sold until depletion.
3. No penalties shall apply for use of legacy labels on legacy stock during the grace period.

SECTION 10. PREEMPTION AND UNIFORMITY

1. This Act preempts conflicting sub-national consumer-facing date-label requirements to ensure national uniformity.
2. Nothing in this section limits general food-safety powers of the Competent Authority.

SECTION 11. ENFORCEMENT

1. After the transition period, non-compliance with Section 4 may be addressed through

civil remedies proportionate to the violation.

2. Good-faith reliance on Lazarus Council model guidance creates a rebuttable presumption of compliance for education and retail signage.

SECTION 12. COMPLIANCE REPORTING (FOR LAZARUS CERTIFICATION)

To maintain Lazarus Law compliance status, the government shall periodically share summary data with the Lazarus Council—such as regulatory alignment steps taken and any measured impacts on donation and waste reduction—to support global transparency and coordination. Detailed or shipment-level reporting is not required by this Act.

SECTION 13. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect as set forth in Section 9.