



**Label better  
less waste**

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# Cheese guidance

**Helping reduce consumer food  
waste, through changes to  
products, packs, labels and retail**

Produce of



**wrap**



**Food  
Standards  
Agency**  
food.gov.uk



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**Dairy  
UK**

# Top actions for consumer waste prevention

✓ Make consumer waste prevention one of the focuses of new product development/ product innovations

✓ Include Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) tips and other communications

✓ Review products (including those on the deli counter) to ensure the right date label, open life and freezing advice is displayed

## Product and packaging design

- Extend the use of re-closable pack formats.
- Investigate other innovations to help householders who throw away cheese because they haven't used it in time ([see consumer insights](#)).

## Recipe advice/motivational messaging

- Use LFHW logo and tips across digital channels and in other communications .
- For example tips like; using cheese in recipes and additional storage tips – *'grate before freezing and use to top a pasta bake'*, *'re-seal tightly to keep me fresher for longer'*.
- Consider messaging on the story of food – e.g. *'Feed, water and love go in – surely this cheese is too good to bin? Use a storage container to keep me fresh in the fridge'*.



## Date labelling and storage advice

1. Use Dairy UK guidance<sup>1</sup> to select the right date label for each product. Only use 'Use By' where there is a food safety reason to use it. Otherwise use 'Best Before', for example, on most hard cheeses.
2. Where 'Open Life' is used, use only the correct corresponding wording for 'Open Life' guidance:
  - *'Once opened, best within X days'* (where important for food quality – e.g. for a MAP bag of grated hard cheese).
  - *'Once opened, use within X days'* (only when required for food safety reasons).
3. For any type of cheese, provide storage advice, which will help the consumer get best quality (and safety, if relevant) from their product. This will help consumers keep their food both safe, and fresher for longer. Such as:

- Using an icon like a blue fridge and/or supporting wording *'Keep in the fridge below 5°C'*.



- *'Once opened, wrap tightly or store in an airtight tub, to keep fresher for longer'*.

4. Reinforce through communication activities on company websites and other marketing channels – e.g. to reiterate what 'Best Before' and 'Use By' mean and to provide freezing guidelines.



5. Review suitability for home freezing and wherever possible use the snowflake icon with freezing and defrosting instructions – e.g. *'Freeze by the date mark shown; best within X months; defrost in the fridge and consume within 1 day'*.

A [decision tree](#) is available to support the decision of which date label should apply.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.dairyuk.org/images/Dairy\\_UK\\_guidance\\_Use\\_by\\_-\\_Best\\_before\\_Sept2012final1.pdf](http://www.dairyuk.org/images/Dairy_UK_guidance_Use_by_-_Best_before_Sept2012final1.pdf)  
NB Currently under review

# Consumer insights and evidence

## Evidence on consumer waste at home<sup>2</sup>

UK consumers waste:

**34,000 tonnes**

of cheese a year (9% of purchases).

**c.10%**

is thrown away unopened;

**c.20%**

is in packs more than half full.

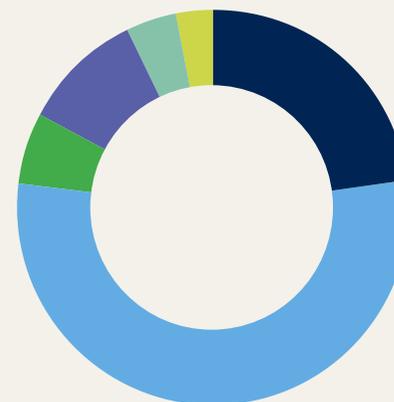
**Half is disposed of** away from meal times e.g. linked to clear outs.

**When not citing the date label,** consumers cited **'mouldy'** (60%) rather than **'hard'** or **'dry'** (5%), for disposal.

## Other insights

1. A recent on-shelf survey found that for cheese there has been an upward trend for pre-packed cheese carrying a 'Best Before' date (75% in 2009 to 97% in 2015), but a downward trend in loose (deli counter) cheese carrying a 'Best Before' date (54% in 2011 to 35% in 2015).<sup>3</sup>
2. The on-shelf survey also found that very few cheese products specify that they can be frozen at home.<sup>3</sup>
3. WRAP's consumer research has found that:
  - Single person householders waste 40% more than others and often report that they are unable to buy packs small enough for their needs.
  - Consumers value re-sealable packaging and innovations that make products last longer.
  - Consumers respond well to 'motivational' messaging on the story of food.

## Reasons for not using cheese purchases



Not used in time (date code)	23%
Not used in time (not date code)	54%
Cooked/served too much	6%
Fussy eating	10%
Accidents	4%
Other	3%

<sup>2</sup> Household Food & Drink Waste – A Product Focus, WRAP 2014

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/helping-consumers-reduce-food-waste-retail-survey-2015>



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