

How should consumers understand the meaning of "Best Before" and "Use By" dates on food packaging in order to prevent food waste and to save money ?

"Best before" indicates the date until when the food retains its expected **quality**.

- **Food is still safe to consume after the indicated "best before" day** on the condition that storage instructions are respected and packaging is not damaged, but it might begin to lose its flavour and texture.
- "Best before" dates appear on a wide range of frozen, dried (pasta, rice), tinned and other foods (vegetable oil, chocolate, etc).
- Check if the packaging is intact, and if the food looks, smells and tastes good before throwing away food past its "best before" date.
- Once a food with a "best before" date on it has been opened, follow any instructions such as "eat within three days of opening", when applicable.

"Use By" indicates the date until when the food can be eaten **safely**.

- **Don't use any food after expiration of the "use by" date.**
- "Use by" dates appear on highly perishable food, from the microbiological point of view, such as fresh fish, fresh minced meat, etc.
- Follow the storage instructions, such as "keep in a refrigerator" or "keep at 2-4°C"; if not the food will spoil quicker and you may risk food poisoning.
- By freezing the food at home soon after purchase, you can extend its life beyond the "use by" date, if it is frozen properly. But make sure you follow any instructions on the pack, such as "freeze up to the use by date", "cook from frozen" or "defrost thoroughly before use and use within 24 hours".
- Once a food with a "use by" date on it has been opened, follow any instructions for storage and use, such as "eat within three days of opening", bearing in mind that food should be consumed before the expiration of the "use by" date.

Find out more about reducing food waste at http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/sustainability/index_en.htm