Increasingly, consumers desire information about the health, safety, environmental and socioeconomic characteristics of food products. These traits often cannot be detected by sight, smell, or taste. Therefore, consumers must use food labels to select products that meet their needs and preferences. The growing consumer and industry interest in food labels presents challenges for governments, which must ensure that the product information is accurate, truthful and not misleading to consumers. Governments must decide whether provision of information should be mandatory or voluntary. With the increase in global trade in food, there is a need to harmonize food labels so that product information is understood and relevant to foreign markets.

Innovations in food labelling provides information about the principles and requirements of food labelling and reviews the latest trends in this important area. Following an introduction on the evolution of food labelling, further chapters cover the Codex Alimentarius and food labelling, international trade agreements, nutrition labelling, allergies and food labels and environmental and social labels, among other topics.

Innovations in food labelling will be an essential reference for food regulatory agencies, food law experts and professionals in the food industry responsible for labelling as well as consumer and environmental associations with an interest in labelling.

Janice Albert is a Nutrition Officer in the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with which this book is copublished.
Innovations in food labelling
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Innovations in food labelling

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Food producers in many countries are keenly interested in finding ways to inform consumers about the qualities of their products at the point of purchase. Many consumers actively seek information about products that have qualities that serve their health needs and are consistent with their values. As a result of these varied interests, food labels are increasingly being used to provide consumers with information about the environmental, technical and socioeconomic conditions under which the products were produced, as well as the health and safety aspects of food products.

The growing consumer and industry interest in food labels presents challenges for government authorities, which must ensure that the information that appears on food packages is useful, credible and presented clearly so that it does not mislead the consumer. With the increase in global trade in food, there is a need to harmonize food labelling so that product information is easily understood and is relevant to consumers in different markets.

Developing and implementing food labelling policies is a complex undertaking that presents many challenges. This book illustrates the multiple purposes food labelling serves and the many steps that different actors must take to implement a successful labelling policy.

FAO, with its breadth of technical expertise and practical experiences in many areas of food production, nutrition, food safety, marketing and trade as well as social development, and its key role in developing global food standards, food laws and international treaties related to food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, is uniquely positioned to assist governments, food producers and consumers in understanding the dynamic role of food labelling in the global food system today.

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