

Trace what's on your plate



Want to be sure you know what you're eating? Then it's time to get label savvy

The recent horsemeat scandal revealed a web of dodgy meat trading that criss-crossed Europe and made us all question what we're eating and where it's from. Buying British makes sense as our meat producers have some of the highest food hygiene, traceability and safety quality standards in the world. But you need to read the small print, as even when products state they are 'made or produced in the UK', this doesn't always mean they're made from British ingredients, and may contain beef from Brazil, chicken from Thailand or pork from the EU.

Buying British on a budget

More than a third of shoppers say they would pay extra for food that's locally produced, but if you're on a tight budget, here's how to keep costs down.

- Shop at your local butcher, who should know how the food has been produced and advise on the best cuts for your budget. Find out more at lovebritishfood.co.uk.
- Buy seasonally - there's a list of what's in season each month at farmingdirect.co.uk.
- Serve smaller portions of better quality meat and fill up with veg.
- Compare prices per 100g as you get a like-for-like comparison of cost.
- To find out which British products are being stocked by your favourite supermarket, visit www.britishmeat.co.uk/supermarkets.

The promise on the packaging



The Red Tractor scheme covers food safety, hygiene, animal welfare, environmental protection and traceability. Nearly 80,000 British farmers are part of the scheme, and the red tractor can be found on poultry, dairy products, fruit, vegetables and even flour and sugar. It's also used by brands such as Alderson, Ambrosia, Countrylife, McCain, Shredded Wheat and Silver Spoon. Find out more at redtractor.org.uk. The Union flag in the red tractor logo is there to guarantee the origin of the food - all Red Tractor products have been farmed, processed and packed in the UK.



The Quality Standard mark ensures your beef or lamb is produced to higher standards than are required by law, with a supply chain that's independently inspected at every stage from the farm to the meat counter. It uses a flag to identify where the meat is from. So, for example, meat that's was born, raised and slaughtered in England will have the St George's flag. The Union flag indicates some part of the food stage took place elsewhere in Britain (eg born in Wales).



The British Lion Quality mark indicates eggs have come from British hens that have been vaccinated against salmonella and have been produced to high standards of hygiene and animal welfare. It also ensures controls on their feed.



The Soil Association logo on food and drink tells you that organic claims on the labelling have been checked and certified from source to retailer, and exceed EU regulations on animal welfare. You'll find the symbol on around 98 per cent of UK organic meat and on some imported foods, including meat, but you'll have to buy local from small producers to find organic poultry that's SA certified.



The Freedom Food symbol can be found on meat, fish and poultry products. The higher welfare standards cover indoor, outdoor, free range and organic farming, with products traceable through the supply chain. Find it in most supermarkets, particularly Sainsbury's.



The Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) symbol, found mainly on fresh veg and bagged salads, shows farmers have adhered to high environmental standards. It's on most Waitrose fresh products, as well as Barna Chips and Furrington Oil.



The Marine Stewardship Council ecolabel tells you the fish has been sustainably sourced and can be traced back to the boat from anywhere in the world. Independent scientists take into account the environmental impact of the catches, and what effect local fishing has on other species. Look for it in Sainsbury's and the Co-op.