

## Describing food products

Look for the meaning of these words  
- What is the meaning of...?

Food production has become increasingly industrialised and globalised, and so knowing what our food contains has become more and more important. Labels do not always help. Adjectives such as '**wholesome**<sup>1</sup>', 'farm fresh' and 'homemade' can be rather vague and meaningless, while the international numbering system for **additives**<sup>2</sup> is often incomprehensible to people. Some familiar descriptions, however, do have a clear official meaning, for example '**wholefoods**<sup>3</sup>', '**free-range**<sup>4</sup> eggs', '**gluten-free**<sup>5</sup> bread' or 'contains no artificial colours or **preservatives**<sup>6</sup>'. Clear and scientifically accurate descriptions can be vital for people who suffer from food **allergies**<sup>7</sup> and for vegetarians or **vegans**<sup>8</sup> who want to know exactly what is in a product, as well as being important for consumers looking for natural or **unprocessed**<sup>9</sup> foods, or those concerned about **animal welfare**<sup>10</sup> who may wish to avoid food produced by **battery-farming**<sup>11</sup> methods and so on. With the growth in popularity of **convenience foods**<sup>12</sup>, alongside public health concerns over bad diet and obesity, simple and unambiguous **nutrition labels**<sup>13</sup> are more important than ever. An example of a simple system is **traffic-light labelling**<sup>14</sup>, which indicates high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) levels of such things as fat, sugar and salt. Finally, good labelling tells us where the food was produced and under what conditions, for example **fair trade**<sup>15</sup> products.

- <sup>1</sup> good for you
- <sup>2</sup> substance added to food to improve its taste or appearance or to preserve it
- <sup>3</sup> foods that have not had any of their natural features taken away or any artificial substances added
- <sup>4</sup> produced by farm animals that are allowed to move around outside and are not kept in cages or stalls
- <sup>5</sup> not containing a protein which is contained in wheat and some other grains
- <sup>6</sup> chemicals used to stop food from decaying
- <sup>7</sup> condition that makes a person become ill or develop skin or breathing problems because they have eaten certain foods or been near certain substances. The related adjective is **allergic (to)**.
- <sup>8</sup> person who does not eat or use any animal products, such as meat, fish, eggs or cheese
- <sup>9</sup> which have not been treated with chemicals that preserve them or give them extra taste or colour
- <sup>10</sup> taking care of animals
- <sup>11</sup> system of producing a large quantity of eggs or meat cheaply by keeping a lot of birds in rows of small cages
- <sup>12</sup> foods that are almost ready to eat or are quick to prepare
- <sup>13</sup> labels that indicate how the food influences your health
- <sup>14</sup> labels with colours like traffic lights that give information on nutrition
- <sup>15</sup> a way of buying and selling products that makes certain that the original producer receives a fair price

**Complete the sentences. The first letter of the missing word is given.**

- 1 The label gave no n..... information, so I didn't know if it was good for me.
- 2 The t..... - ..... system of labelling is easy to understand with just three familiar colours.
- 3 I try to make my diet as w..... as possible and not eat things which I know are bad for me.
- 4 It's sometimes difficult to find u..... foods – everything seems to contain chemicals or preservatives of some kind.
- 5 My sister has to have a g..... - ..... diet as wheat makes her ill.
- 6 The laws governing b..... f..... were changed recently and birds must have larger cages now.
- 7 I'm a vegetarian but I don't think I could ever become a v..... . I would find the diet too restrictive.
- 8 My diet is mostly natural foods because I buy a lot of w..... .