

Appendix A: Focus Group Summary

About the Focus Groups

In Fall 2009, Anaphylaxis Canada consultant, Marilyn Allen, conducted two focus group sessions (2 hours) involving two community groups in Ontario which are affiliated with Anaphylaxis Canada. Participants, predominantly parents (mostly mothers) of food-allergic children, from the Ottawa Anaphylaxis Support Group (OASG) and the Toronto Anaphylaxis Education Group (TAEG) were invited to attend an overview presentation on the proposed food labelling amendments. Several participants had more than one child with food allergies; many had children with multiple food allergies. Both groups are actively engaged in community awareness initiatives, reaching more than 200 families in their local communities. The format for the focus groups allowed for sufficient time for questions and some discussion prior to completion of a 13 question survey. A summary of the results, which were collated by Anaphylaxis Canada staff, is provided below.

Poll Questions

1. Will the listing of all components that are comprised of common allergens in these foods be helpful?

	# Votes	%
Yes	49	98
No	1	2
Total	50	100

It needs to contain cross-contamination info to be effective.

2. The changes to the “Common Allergen List” include listing nuts by their name rather than the former class name of "nut" or "tree nut". Do you have any concern with this change?

	# Votes	%
Yes	20	40
No	30	60
Total	50	100

The species name should be followed by "tree nut" in brackets - e.g. almond (tree nut) - so it's simple for buyers to recognize that it's a nut. (26)

I'm concerned that some tree nuts capable of causing allergic reactions are going to be excluded from the list. (2)

Concerns me - do the listed tree nuts have traces of other nuts?

[Answered No] As long as it is listed by full name, i.e. Brazil NUT, Macadamia NUT, so others (non-allergic) buying food can still recognize that it is a nut, even if they don't know what a macadamia is.

How does this affect "may contain" issues?

3. Do you like the option of listing allergens at the end of the ingredient list, e.g. Allergy and Intolerance Information - Contains Soy, Milk, Egg, Walnut, Almond and Wheat?

	# Votes	%
Yes	31	66
No	16	34
Total	47	100

It should be mandatory, not "optional", to include a declaration statement at the end. (7)

They should come up with universal picture symbols of the top allergens to put on package (and put specific ingredients), especially for people who don't speak English. (2)

4. Should it be a requirement to list ingredients in (choose your 1st choice only): a) Only the ingredient list; b) Following the optional declaration statement; or c) Both places?

	# Votes	%
Only the ingredient list	3	6.3
Following the optional declaration statement	3	6.3
Both places	42	87
Total	48	100

The ingredients should be listed in both places, to make it easier for the consumer to read and identify allergens. (7)

It would be best to be listed in both places, but I'd be OK for it to be just at the end.

The statements should go together - no gaps.

A declaration statement should be included in bold lettering.

5. Do you like the wording of the optional declaration term, e.g. Allergy and Intolerance Information - Contains Soy?

	# Votes	%
Yes	23	49
No	24	51
Total	47	100

Term is too long. (3)

Term is too long. Prefer: "Contains..." (11)

Term is too long. Prefer: "Allergy Information: Contains..." (5)

Term is too long. Prefer: "Allergens..." (4)

Needs to be more concise for smaller packages.

Perhaps an easily recognizable symbol could be used. It would save label space which is always a concern to manufacturers (gain acceptance). For example, the Health Check symbol (circle with check mark inside). The "Allergy and Intolerance Info" symbol, with the allergen following.

"Intolerance" is implied.

I think "allergy" has more impact than intolerance, so "Allergy Information" would be more appropriate in my opinion. But if it is in regards to Celiac, use both (for wheat ingredients).

6. Is listing the source of all the protein in these ingredients important to you?

	# Votes	%
Yes	48	96
No	2	4
Total	50	100

As an industry representative, this requirement would be a challenge for me (i.e. for the industry).

Listing of the source protein is very important! (3)

Fish protein should also be included in items such as gelatin.

7. Was this information easy to attain from a manufacturer's customer service representative?

	# Votes	%
Yes	1	2
No	40	98
Total	41	100

Depends on company, but generally no.

Sometimes - not consistent. (10)

Never tried.

How much money is being spent on enforcement?

8. Do you like the common name of a protein being added in brackets immediately following the uncommon protein name?

	# Votes	%
Yes	47	96
No	2	4
Total	49	100

Listing the common name of the protein is very important. (4)

Yes, unless the common name is listed elsewhere.

Prefer the use of a declaration statement with common names.

9. Choose your preference:

- a. Listing only species names of fish, shellfish, and crustacea (e.g. cod, shad, tuna, haddock, hake, turbot, whiting, etc; clam, cockle, periwinkle, quahaugs, squid, etc; crab, crayfish, lobster, prawns, shrimp, etc.); or
- b. Listing the species names / common names followed by the class name in parenthesis, e.g. turbot (fish); quahaugs (shellfish); prawns (crustacea).

	# Votes	%
a) Listing only the species names.	47	96
b) Listing the species names followed by the class name in parenthesis.	2	4
Total	49	100

List both the species and the class names. This is what I would like for tree nuts too. (7)

Listing both the species and class names is helpful, especially for people with English as a 2nd language.

10. Referring to the label on the previous slide: Do you think this All or None approach when using the optional declarations statements will help to avoid errors, e.g. sulphite, wheat, milk, soy not sulphite, milk?

	# Votes	%
Yes	44	96
No	2	4
Total	46	100

Yes, listing all allergens is very important! (5)

It should be mandatory to have both an ingredient list and a declaration statement.

[Answered No] Very confusing. List allergies separate from intolerances. Be consistent or it gets very confusing.

11. If a bakery or deli decides to label a product, then the ingredient list will have to be complete and accurate. Do you agree with this condition?

	# Votes	%
Yes	48	100
No	0	0
Total	48	100

12. If a bakery, deli, or home industry sells or donates products to be sold off of the premise, they will have to provide an ingredient list. Do you agree with this requirement?

	# Votes	%
Yes	47	96
No	2	4
Total	49	100

13. Should this same condition apply to food products made for bake sales or church or community fairs?

	# Votes	%
Yes	16	32
No	34	68
Total	50	100

Yes - ingredients should be made available.

No, it would be impossible to police and enforce. (8)

No. Should have exemption for donations, church sales, bake sales, etc. (2)

Labelling would not be accurate. I wouldn't trust it. (6)

Wouldn't be realistic for everyone and the legal implications would be astronomical. (2)

The average person does not know enough about home cross-contamination, may contain labelling, or reading labels. (4)

Sale of donated product by a registered charity or non-profit should be exempt from the need to put an ingredient label. But if anyone decides to put an ingredient list, they must conform with no exception. There is no way to tell the difference between an ingredient list and an exempted ingredient list.

These are charitable fundraising initiatives, however a warning regarding that possible allergens are present should be posted and announced prior to the sale (in English, French, and the dominant ethnic language of the community or parish). Bottom line is - it's buyer beware. Those who have concerns will avoid the sale anyway.

Additional Comments

Need labelling on retail deli meat products and products made and sold by butchers. (2)

Bulk food packaged at retail should list potential allergens. Meat products barbecued, broiled, or roasted at retail should also list allergens. Farmer's Market - should include labels or in the least common allergens.

Labelling laws should not apply to small companies. Small and medium enterprise don't have the resources (money, knowledge, staff) to be able to conform.

I want labels in a store to be accurate. I want priority allergens to be listed. May contain statements - need to include all food and not list every allergen to "cover themselves."

Want further review on labels for shampoo, cosmetics - all beauty products. My son has an anaphylactic allergy (i.e. needed EpiPen) to kiwi. When part of a flavour it would be great to have it declared.

My concern with the optional allergen statement is that I fear there may be "over-labelling", e.g. "CONTAINS: soy, wheat," when an item might contain either.

As for bakeries, this is huge. Currently no labelling occurs and I've had a reaction to sesame arising out of non-disclosure.

Restaurants should provide ingredient listings if asked by the customer.

Most importantly, the stores that sell food products that are labelled with all the ingredients for allergy and intolerance purposes MUST put proper advertisements to "READ THE LABEL." After all the effort and work put into creating appropriate labelling for allergies, companies, manufacturers, and stores need to remind people to read labels, or else not effective.

For the future: I would like "may contain" type statements to be mandatory (but not in a way that always lists "may contain" as a precaution, regardless of likelihood, just to avoid liability). I would like regulations in place so that manufacturers can't call themselves "nut free" without adhering to some standard. I would like it so that the peanut free symbol can't be used where there is a possibility of tree nuts or if there is a possibility of tree nuts, it's written in large below the no peanut symbol. It's too confusing for the non-allergic community to know that the peanut-free label isn't safe for those allergic to tree nuts. I would also like some regulations around supermarkets' handling of fruits and vegetables. I don't want loose nuts around open fruits and veggies. I worry about cross-contamination at the grocery store.