

Clean Label: The 2020 guide to an evolving trend



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Synopsis

Clean label is a concept that continues to evolve in its meaning and relevance to consumers. It has come to be most closely associated with ideas such as simplicity and more natural and recognisable ingredients. It encapsulates the desire from consumers to purchase food they believe they can trust, that is somehow close to nature, and that contains familiar-sounding, rather than artificial, ingredients. The actual word 'clean' is hardly ever used. However, recently it seems the idea of clean label has evolved to also encompass the idea of sustainable sourcing and provenance.

"Consumers create their own definition of what 'clean' means to them. The word 'clean' is scarce on food and drink labels. Instead, consumers look for attributes and claims that they link to 'clean label, or 'clean eating', such as organic, natural, and increasingly, claims relating to a brand's 'clean conscience'," says Emma Schofield, Senior Analyst, Global Food Science at Mintel.

The following report will demonstrate how the concept of 'clean label' has evolved and what producers should be embracing when trying to present their brands as such.

Key takeaways

- Clean label is a consumer-driven trend towards fewer and more natural ingredients
- The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified existing health trends and created opportunities for clean label concepts such as minimally processed, especially in the convenience category
- Clean label is no longer just about the food. Consumers want to know that the company behind the food or beverage product also has a 'clean' image
- The trend towards fewer and more recognisable ingredients continues to spread across the food industry
- Health scares around ultra-processed foods are driving consumer interest in more natural ingredients and less heavily processed foods, including in the plant-based foods category
- Sustainability is driving consumers towards clean label trends, with some consumers defining minimally processed foods as a more sustainable food choice

