



Press release

Immediate issue: 15 September 2014

COELIAC UK ANNOUNCES ASDA AS THE FIRST SUPERMARKET TO SIGN UP TO THE GLUTEN-FREE GUARANTEE IN ALL ITS STORES

Coeliac UK, the national Charity for people with coeliac disease, has boosted its aim to improve availability of gluten-free food in UK stores with Asda signing up to the Charity's Gluten-free Guarantee campaign.

And three other leading supermarkets, Waitrose, Tesco and Marks & Spencer have also made significant progress in meeting the Gluten-free Guarantee.

The campaign, launched by the Charity earlier this year, asked supermarkets to commit to having a basket of eight core items of gluten-free food in stock across all their stores, making it easier for people with coeliac disease to manage their diet. The eight gluten-free staple items are: white bread, pasta, cereal, flour, cereal bars, rolls, crackers and one other bread (brown or seeded). Asda is the first UK supermarket to fully commit to the campaign.

All Asda's stores across the country, including its smaller stores, have signed up to the Gluten-free Guarantee and will stock all these eight items from 15 September 2014.

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive of Coeliac UK, said: "In a recent survey about shopping habits 74% of Coeliac UK Members who responded said they have to visit more than one supermarket to complete their Free From shopping. For that reason we are thrilled Asda has confirmed its commitment by guaranteeing customers will be able to buy the eight staple gluten-free items in each of its stores whatever the size of the store. Things have improved beyond recognition in the last few years in larger supermarkets but many will be surprised that for most people, shopping for gluten-free items is still a real challenge - especially if they only have access to smaller convenience stores. For this reason we are very pleased to see other leading supermarkets are also working towards the Gluten-free Guarantee."

Waitrose has confirmed it already stocks the eight staple items in Coeliac UK's Gluten-free Guarantee basket of goods in all its supermarkets and all items are now available in its little Waitrose convenience stores. From 22 September, all eight items will also be in every Waitrose shop at Welcome Break motorway service stations.¹

From October 2014, all of Tesco's Extras, Superstores and Metros, which equates to 917 of its stores, will stock a minimum of one variety of each of the eight staple items. Tesco is committed to meeting the Gluten-free Guarantee across the whole estate² by summer 2015.

Marks & Spencer will offer six of the eight gluten-free items by the end of 2014 in all 500 of its own stores, excluding their 250 franchised stores³ and will work with Coeliac UK and customers over the next two years with an aim to supply all eight items.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune disease caused by intolerance to gluten. Left untreated it may lead to infertility, osteoporosis and small bowel cancer. 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease, with the prevalence rising to 1 in 10 for close family members. However, current statistics show that only 24% of those with the condition are diagnosed leaving an estimated half a million people in the UK undiagnosed.

Sarah Sleet said: "Diagnosis levels of coeliac disease are increasing and we are currently seeing around 1200 new Members joining every month who depend on gluten-free food to manage their condition. It is therefore essential that supermarkets have sufficient stock available across all their stores to meet this increased demand and mitigate the need for customers to trawl a number of stores to find staple items."

"We are delighted that four of the UK's leading supermarkets have risen to our Gluten-free Guarantee challenge, and we will continue to work with these and other UK supermarkets to make shopping for the basics an exercise free from hassle and frustration," she continued.

The symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected. Symptoms can include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, recurrent miscarriages, weight loss (but not in all cases), skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems.

Notes to editor

¹ Waitrose's nine smallest shops on petrol station forecourts are currently unable to stock the full list of eight items all of the time due to limited space

² Tesco's estate encompasses 2524 stores including Tesco Express Stores

³ Marks & Spencer's franchise stores are Channel Islands and overseas stores, M&S Outlets and Simply Food Stores at BP Connect, railways and motorway services, hospitals and airports.

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- A wide range of case studies are available on request from Coeliac UK.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0845 305 2060 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk.