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## Guidance on unit pricing

*Préconisations concernant l'indication des prix à l'unité*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Project Committee ISO/PC 294, *Guidance on unit pricing*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

Unit pricing is the display of the price of a product per standard unit of measure. For example, a 500 g bag of rice offered at \$2,00 would display a unit price of \$4,00 per kg. A 2 kg bag of rice offered at \$7,00 would display a unit price of \$3,50 per kg. It may be provided for packaged products (containing constant or variable quantities) or non-packaged products. Unit pricing provides consumers with a base price with which to compare like items of different sizes and brands. It can greatly reduce confusion and help consumers make better informed choices, especially when there are a multitude of products, brands and package sizes.

This document is intended to improve the accuracy and usability of unit pricing for consumers. It offers retailers, policy makers and other stakeholders guidance for establishing best practice for providing and displaying the unit price of products, including what unit prices are and how they are to be used, by

- defining unit pricing systems and the types of labels and promotions to which they may apply,
- assisting improvements to current unit pricing, and
- enhancing transparency of pricing information to consumers.

Consumers use unit pricing when it is made available. It is useful as a price comparison tool as a way of identifying products that offer the best value for money. Sustained usage across time is supported when there is periodic education or reminder communications.

There are other benefits for consumers, retailers and manufacturers.

- Providing consumers with better tools to compare prices is especially helpful where package sizes change and retail prices remain the same. Consumers are also better able to consistently determine actual price savings when “sale” items are effectively marked with unit pricing.
- Increased consumer satisfaction, improved pricing accuracy, increased sales of retailer branded products and, depending on the jurisdiction, removal of the need to display the selling price on each item of packaged product.

**NOTE** Retailer branded products refers to products marketed and sold under a retailer’s brand name or a brand name not associated with any proprietary manufacturer, e.g. private label, house brand, retailer brand.

- One strategy governments have used to help consumers compare prices is to introduce standardized container size regulations for selected common food and consumer products such as cosmetics and processed food products. Unit pricing is a much less complex and onerous method for manufacturers and retailers to implement; its introduction has led some jurisdictions to reject, reduce or eliminate standard package size regulations as a policy solution.

This document was developed to provide guidance on best practices for retailers or governments wishing to introduce voluntary or mandatory unit pricing systems and to help improve existing voluntary or mandatory unit pricing systems to ensure that consumers are provided with information that is easy to notice, read, understand and use.

The guidance provided here is intended to be adaptable depending on the size and level of maturity of an organization’s management system and on the context, nature and complexity of the organization’s activities, including its compliance policy and objectives.

# Guidance on unit pricing

## 1 Scope

This document gives principles and best practice guidelines for unit pricing displayed by written, printed or electronic means.

It includes guidance on

- the provision of unit price,
- units of measure used to express unit price including: weight, length, volume, count, area and other forms of measure,
- the display of unit price, and
- implementation, communication and education of consumers.

This document is applicable to any retailer, including supermarkets, hardware stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, automotive parts suppliers and pet product suppliers.

It is applicable to packaged and non-packaged food and consumer products where the price is displayed, including

- at point of sale, including in-store and online, and
- when relevant communications about the product are released (including advertising by electronic and printed formats).

This document excludes services and merchandise, such as clothing and electronic goods sold as a single item.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1

#### **constant measure package**

products that are packaged items of a particular type containing the same quantity

EXAMPLE One litre packs of milk.

### 3.2

#### **consumer**

individual member of the general public purchasing food and products for private purposes