# Liberal Democrats push legal requirement for supermarkets to disclose shrinkflation amid cost of living crisis



Proposals aimed at mandating supermarkets to disclose instances of "shrinkflation" are gaining momentum amidst a backdrop of rising living costs in the UK. The Liberal Democrats have put forth an amendment to the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, requiring large grocery retailers to inform consumers when the size of a product is reduced while prices remain stagnant or increase. According to recent research by Compare the Market, familiar items such as digestive biscuits, butter, crisps, and chocolate bars have all seen reductions in quantity, consequently inflating the price per unit.

This move aims to ensure that shoppers are not blindsided by decreasing portion sizes in products, as consumers are already grappling with economic pressures. Clive Jones, the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for trade, articulated the urgency behind this amendment, asserting that consumers have faced undue hardship during a prevailing cost-of-living crisis. “The scourge of shrinkflation needs to be exposed,” he stated. “Shoppers have been hammered… They need to be called out on it and for shoppers to know when they are at risk of being ripped off.” As the Bill progresses, the government’s acceptance of these amendments could significantly bolster consumer protection.

The broader implications of shrinkflation have sparked debates not only among consumers but also regulators. A significant survey by Barclays highlighted that nearly 80% of consumers express concerns about shrinkflation, with a substantial number advocating for government intervention. Noteworthy examples of shrinkflation include well-known brands like Listerine and PG Tips, which have seen substantial alterations in packaging without corresponding price adjustments. For instance, Listerine's Fresh Burst mouthwash reduced from 600ml to 500ml while its price increased by 52p, leading to a startling 21% price hike per unit for a 17% decrease in product size.

The discussion around labelling has gained traction as well. Analogous movements in France have prompted supermarkets like Carrefour to implement transparency measures, clearly marking products affected by shrinkflation, stating: “This product has seen its weight decrease and the price charged by our supplier increase.” Such steps could serve as a potential model for the UK, where calls for similar transparency are growing louder. In light of these developments, the Liberal Democrats’ proposition is seen not only as a legislative necessity but as a crucial step to empower consumers in a market increasingly riddled with hidden costs.

As scrutiny intensifies, the UK's regulatory bodies are also gearing up to enforce clearer labelling practices. A spokesperson from the Department for Business and Trade remarked on the government’s commitment to protecting consumers from unfair commercial practices, promising strict new laws to enhance pricing clarity in supermarkets. This is especially vital in a landscape where data indicates significant reductions in product sizes over the past decade, with items like digestive biscuits and Choco Pops experiencing substantial shrinkage while their unit costs have soared remarkably.

With these considerations in mind, consumers are left navigating a complicated purchasing landscape. The proposed amendments could play a pivotal role in ensuring they are well-informed and not caught unaware by shrinking portion sizes and soaring costs, echoing a broader desire for enhanced corporate transparency and consumer protections in the evolving marketplace.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/calls-to-legally-require-supermarkets-to-reveal-shrinkflation-to-customers-SCMBWPDSGBOL3KZRT4BNT4YMLY/), [[2]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/01/22/pg-tips-shrinkflation/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/calls-to-legally-require-supermarkets-to-reveal-shrinkflation-to-customers-SCMBWPDSGBOL3KZRT4BNT4YMLY/), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/03/04/food-companies-must-be-forced-to-display-shrinkflation-labe/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/2024-01-19/mouthwash-teabags-and-sausages-latest-examples-of-shrinkflation-which), [[4]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2023/09/13/shrinkflation-warning-labels/), [[6]](https://metro.co.uk/2024/01/22/biggest-culprits-supermarket-shrinkflation-revealed-20151170/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/09/04/products-most-shrinkflation/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/calls-to-legally-require-supermarkets-to-reveal-shrinkflation-to-customers-SCMBWPDSGBOL3KZRT4BNT4YMLY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/01/22/pg-tips-shrinkflation/> - This article discusses how products like Listerine mouthwash, PG Tips tea bags, and Kettle Chips have been affected by shrinkflation. Listerine's Fresh Burst mouthwash decreased from 600ml to 500ml, with a price increase of 52p at Tesco, resulting in a 21% higher price for 17% less product. PG Tips' Tasty Decaf Pyramid tea bags reduced from 180 to 140 bags, with some retailers raising the price from £4 to £5.09, leading to a 64% cost increase per tea bag. The article highlights how these changes impact consumers, with shoppers paying more for less. ([grocerygazette.co.uk](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/01/22/pg-tips-shrinkflation/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-01-19/mouthwash-teabags-and-sausages-latest-examples-of-shrinkflation-which> - This report by ITV News highlights recent examples of shrinkflation, including reductions in product sizes without corresponding price decreases. Listerine Fresh Burst mouthwash shrank from 600ml to 500ml, with a price increase of 52p at Tesco, resulting in a 21% higher price for 17% less product. PG Tips' Tasty Decaf Pyramid tea bags decreased from 180 to 140 bags, with some retailers raising the price from £4 to £5.09, leading to a 64% cost increase per tea bag. The article also mentions other products affected by shrinkflation, such as Kettle Chips, Andrex wet wipes, Colgate toothpaste, McVitie’s dark chocolate digestives, and Lurpak butter. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/2024-01-19/mouthwash-teabags-and-sausages-latest-examples-of-shrinkflation-which?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2023/09/13/shrinkflation-warning-labels/> - This article discusses the pressure on UK supermarkets to implement warning labels on products affected by shrinkflation. It references Carrefour in France, which began identifying products impacted by shrinkflation with labels stating: 'This product has seen its weight decrease and the price charged by our supplier increase.' The article suggests that UK supermarkets should follow suit to inform consumers about size reductions and price increases. ([grocerygazette.co.uk](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2023/09/13/shrinkflation-warning-labels/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/03/04/food-companies-must-be-forced-to-display-shrinkflation-labe/> - This article reports on calls for food companies to display 'shrinkflation' labels on products that have been reduced in size but retained the same price. A survey by Barclays found that almost 80% of customers are concerned about shrinkflation, and nearly two-thirds of shoppers want the government to introduce measures to address it. The article also mentions that regulators have been scrutinising labelling in supermarkets to ensure consumers can make informed purchasing decisions. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/03/04/food-companies-must-be-forced-to-display-shrinkflation-labe/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://metro.co.uk/2024/01/22/biggest-culprits-supermarket-shrinkflation-revealed-20151170/> - This article by Metro News reveals the products most affected by shrinkflation, according to Which? research. Items such as Andrex Flushable Washlets, Bisto Best Chicken Gravy Granules, Cadbury’s Brunch Chocolate Chip Bars, Coffee Mate Original Whitener, Colgate Triple Action Toothpaste, Kettle Chips Sea Salt and Crushed Black Peppercorns Crisps, Lurpak Slightly Salted Butter, McVitie’s Digestives Dark Chocolate Biscuits, and Yeo Valley Organic Salted Spreadable have all seen reductions in size without corresponding price decreases. The article highlights the impact of these changes on consumers and calls for greater transparency from manufacturers and retailers. ([metro.co.uk](https://metro.co.uk/2024/01/22/biggest-culprits-supermarket-shrinkflation-revealed-20151170/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/09/04/products-most-shrinkflation/> - This article discusses a study by Compare the Market on products most impacted by shrinkflation over the past decade. Digestive biscuits have experienced a 28% decrease in size since 2014, followed by Choco Pops at 24%, leading to a 61% increase in unit cost. The study also notes that digestive biscuits have seen a 129% increase in unit cost over the same period, meaning consumers are now paying 71p more for 28% less product. The article provides a detailed breakdown of the top five products affected by shrinkflation. ([grocerygazette.co.uk](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/09/04/products-most-shrinkflation/?utm_source=openai))