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Cut the Slack

"Slack fill." It's the term industry insiders use for packages that contain less than they seem to. If you've ever wondered why so few crackers tumble out of that tall box, or why you stare into that package of rice mix wondering where the rest went, now you know. It's a ruse that can trip up even the savviest shopper—at least once—because you're not likely to figure out what's going on until after you get the package home. Unlike butchers who put their thumb on the scale, slack fill doesn't just pick your pocket. It wastes energy and helps clog landfills. It's also illegal.

The Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act prohibits the sale, advertising, or importing of foods that are "packaged in a container that has been manufactured, constructed or filled or is displayed in such a manner that a consumer might reasonably be misled with respect to the quality or quantity of the product."

But the law has a loophole big enough to drive a food package through: it allows any "recognized and accepted production practice that is reasonably necessary."

Oops!

Here are a few examples of slack fill. We bet you can come up with plenty more.



Let's hope you're not expecting a crowd for dinner.



Five bars in a box that could easily hold more.



We won't blame you if you don't want to share.



Now you know why you're always running out.

Attack Slack

Feel cheated by slack fill? E-mail your digital photo examples to nahalert@istar.ca or mail your photos or packages to Misleading Packaging, CSPI, Suite 2701, CTTC Bldg., 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5R1.

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