



Department
of Health

The UK's Voluntary Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling Scheme

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Joint meeting on front-of-pack nutrition labelling

23rd April 2018

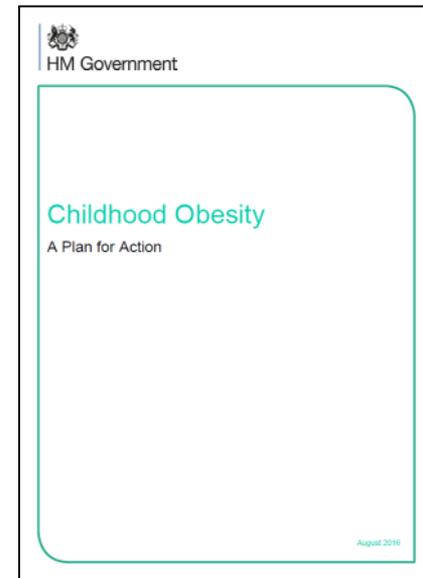
Policy context: the UK's obesity challenge

Children

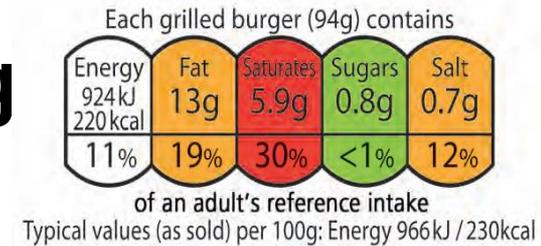
- Nearly **1 in 4** children are overweight or obese by the time they are 5 years old
- More than **1 in 3** are overweight or obese by the time they turn 11 years old
- Obese children are more likely to become obese adults

Adults

- More than **6 out of 10** adults are overweight or obese
- **1 out of 4** adults are obese
- Stark inequalities gap



Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling



- UK wide voluntary scheme introduced in 2013, combines colour coding and percentage reference intakes.
- Aim is to facilitate consumer understanding of nutrition information and help people make healthier choices.
- Enables consumers to see at a glance the balance of nutrients and make informed and healthier choices.
- Adopted by two-thirds of the packaged food and drink market in the UK.
- Recent research from Kantar shows it helps consumers have healthier shopping baskets (lower in salt, saturated fat and sugar)

Foundations of the scheme

In line with the EU Regulation No. 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (EU FIC)

- Article 35:

- Objective and non-discriminatory
- Must not mislead or confuse the consumer
- Research and evidence

Basic elements of the nutrition label

- **Energy** value in kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal) per 100g/ml and in a specified portion of the product.
- Quantity of nutrients in grams of **fat**, **saturated fat** (“saturates”), (total) **sugars** and **salt** in grams, in a specified portion of the product.
- **Portion size** information expressed in a way that is easily recognisable by, and meaningful to the consumer. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pie or 1 burger.
- **% RI** information based on the quantity of each nutrient and energy value in a portion of the food.
- **Colour** coding of the nutrient content of the food.
- Companies may additionally include the descriptors “High”, “Medium” or “Low” (HML).
- Information given on an ‘as sold’ or ‘as consumed’ basis.

Nutrient thresholds

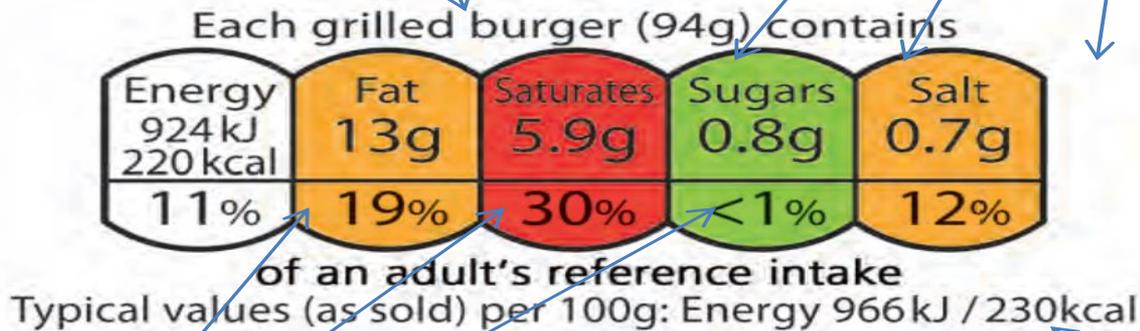
	Reference Intakes (Annex XIII EU Reg 1169/2011)	Low Green*	Medium Amber	High Red (25% of each nutrient RI)	Portion >100g High Red (30% of each nutrient RI)
Fat	70g	≤3.0g/100	>3.0g to ≤17.5g/100g	>17.5 g/100g	>21g per portion
Saturates	20g	≤1.5g/100g	>1.5g to ≤5.0g/100g	>5.0g/100g	>6g per portion
(Total) Sugar	90g	≤5.0g/100g	> 5.0g to ≤22.5g/100g	>22.5g/100g	>27g per portion
Salt	6g	≤0.3g/100g	>0.3g to ≤1.5g/100g	>1.5g/100g	>1.8g per portion

Table 1: Food (Portion size criteria applies to portions/serving sizes greater than 100g)

- The **green** (low) /amber (medium) thresholds are determined by the EU Reg 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims
- The **red** (high) cut off is based on whether the nutrient provides >25% of the reference intake (RI) value (ie the recommended maximum amount of that nutrients we should have in a day)

EU Reg. 1169/2011 requires a portion size declaration that is easily recognisable to the consumer.

UK Health Ministers have recommended the inclusion of colour coding as their preferred 'additional form of expression' (Article 35 – EU Reg. 1169/2011). This is based on extensive consumer research stretching back over 9 years which demonstrates that a label that combines colour and % reference intakes is preferred by consumers and is most effective at enabling them to make healthier



EU Reg. 1169/2011 allows for the inclusion of % reference intakes. The combination of colour coding and reference intakes allows consumers to identify foods that are high in nutrients of public health concern and how much they contribute, per eating occasion, to their diet.

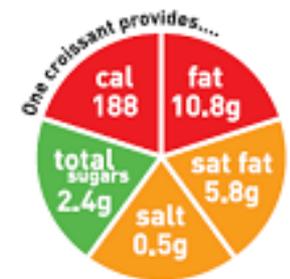
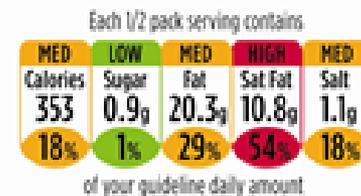
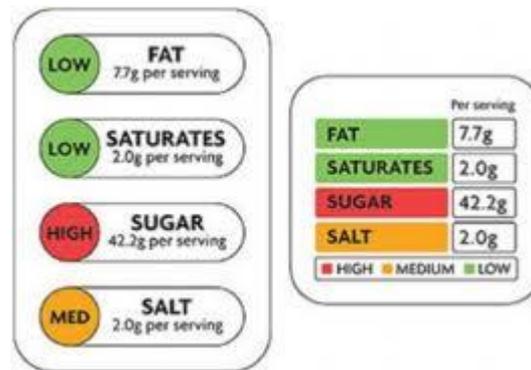
EU Reg. 1169/2011 requires information on energy or energy plus fat, saturates, sugars and salt. This can be provided per portion or per 100g but where provided per portion energy must be additionally provided per 100g

Our scheme is based on 12 years of research, extensive modelling, and stakeholder engagement

- 2001 – Qualitative Research on Signposting
- 2004 – Testing 5 labelling concepts
- 2005 – Further creative development of GDA approaches
- 2005 – Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of signposting labelling concepts
- 2009 – Qualitative and quantitative research
- 2010 – Citizens forums
- 2012 & 2013 – Nutrition labelling consultation, reports of stakeholder discussions and summary of modelling work to support UK recommendation.
- 2016 – Evaluation of the scheme

What we learned: consumer needs

- A label that included both % reference intakes and colour was the label most preferred by consumers and worked best in enabling them to make healthier choices
- Consumers were confused because there were many different front of pack labels on our market – colour only, colour and %RI and RI only. This meant products in the same store could not easily be compared.
- Information based on per portion was preferred.
- Colour coding most used element but consumers welcome numbers to ‘check’ absolute levels especially when comparing products and feel more able to make an informed decision.



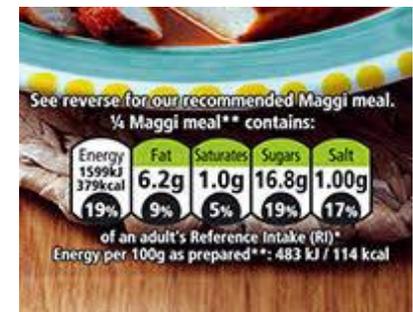
What we learned: use of colour

- Attitudes (specific dietary needs) play a part in consumers balancing high and low levels of different nutrients in single foods
- Any red provoked further investigation in more detailed nutrition information and more than 2 reds lead to in category trading where possible.
- Consumers reacted to seeing less reds more strongly than seeing more greens.
- Consumers balance sign posting with more general knowledge and are willing to accept more reds in some product categories e.g. ice-cream, fat spreads, snacks, desserts, dairy, confectionery.



What we learned: impact for consumers

- Multiple FoP labels on the market were confusing - 'information overload' → difficult for consumers to choose the healthier options
- Consumers did not view a red FoP label as 'stop'.
- 26% of people said that they used colour coded FoP labels for help on healthy eating.
- 74% of those concerned about being overweight agree that having nutritional information presented in the same way on all food and drink would make healthier choices easier.
- 78-80% of those looking for specific low levels of nutrients e.g. low sat fat also agreed that a consistent presentation would be helpful.
- 63% of respondents rated the healthiness of food as being more important than cost (59%) but behind taste (89%).



What we learned: motivations for using FoP

- 33% of people using FoP were concerned about being overweight.
- 35-38% were looking for low levels of specific nutrients e.g. low fat/low salt.
- 46% used FoP following healthy eating advice in the news.
- 41% agree it is important to check nutritional labelling for new products.
- Only 18% of those who said they did not have a health concern have used FoP.



2016 evaluation of the scheme

- Over 80% of people say they look at FoP nutrition labels, but almost 20% never do.
- People that look at FoP labels have healthier shopping baskets with fewer calories, less sugar, fat and salt content and higher fibre content.
- Sugar is seen as the most important information on the label. Colour coding and number of calories seen as the most useful information; the weight of nutrient and the recommended portion sizes seem to be the least useful.
- Some confusion about portion sizes, reference intake information, and difficulty in visualising grams of nutrients.
- Pre-Families and families are most likely to look at FoP labels. People living on lower incomes tend to pay less attention to labels with the exception of those for ready meals.

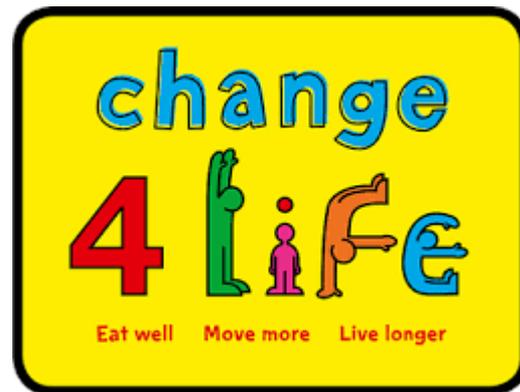
Benefits of consistent communication

- Research has shown that the use of consistent FoP labelling across as many food products as possible will help consumers to become familiar with its format, and to use it to balance their diet and control their energy intake.
- A consistent scheme across the UK market and coordinated messaging can improve our ability to educate consumers on how to use this information to improve their diet and can help prevent confusion.
- Clear FoP information supports consumers in making healthier choices and realising those benefits.
- Research and modelling have also shown that even small changes to the diet can have significant impacts on individuals' health, and in reducing the costs of ill-health to the economy.



How we are supporting the scheme

- In November 2016 we produced revised guidance to help retailers improve consumer awareness of the Front of Pack scheme (www.gov.uk/government/publications/front-of-pack-nutrition-labelling-guidance)
- The Eatwell Guide aims to assist the population in choosing a varied and balanced diet to meet latest Government dietary advice.
- Change4Life healthy eating campaigns : Sugar Swaps (2015), Sugar Smart (2016) and Be Food Smart (2017).



Guide to creating a front of pack (FoP) nutrition label for pre-packed products sold through retail outlets

Updated November 2018