

www.food.gov.uk

**Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling - The UK Experience**

Rosemary Hignett  
Food Standards Agency  
Championing Public Health Nutrition  
Ottawa, 22/23 October 2008

www.food.gov.uk

**Why the Need for Front of Pack Signpost Labelling?**

- Rising levels of obesity
- Consumers eat too much:
  - saturated fat
  - added sugar
  - salt

www.food.gov.uk

**Why the Need for Front of Pack Signpost Labelling?**

- For many years UK has had a high level of back of pack nutrition labelling
- Yet many UK consumers still find this information difficult to find, read and use and want a more prominent "at a glance" approach

www.food.gov.uk

**Agency Consumer Research (2004 - 2006) – to inform development of UK recommendations**

- Preference - what signpost formats appeal to consumers?
- Performance - how do consumers understand the information provided in the signpost?
- Products for which categories is this information most useful?

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/signposting/signpostlabelresearch/>

www.food.gov.uk

**Formats rejected on preference**

www.food.gov.uk

**GDA formats rejected**

Fat	17% GDA	LOW
Salt	5.4% GDA	MED
Sugar	29.3% GDA	HIGH
Saturates	1.5% GDA	LOW
Fat	17% GDA	LOW
Salt	5.4% GDA	MED
Sugar	29.3% GDA	HIGH
Saturates	1.5% GDA	LOW

SATURATES	1.5% GDA	LOW
FAT	17% GDA	LOW
SALT	5.4% GDA	MED
SUGAR	29.3% GDA	HIGH

### Formats for performance test

SATURATES	GDA 20g	0.3g per serving
FAT	GDA 70g	0.75g per serving
SALT	GDA 6g	0.3g per serving
SUGAR	GDA 40g	11.7g per serving

CALORIES	155 per serving	GDA 2000
SATURATES	0.3g per serving	GDA 20g
FAT	0.75g per serving	GDA 70g
SALT	0.3g per serving	GDA 6g
SUGAR	11.7g per serving	GDA 40g

### Main Findings of Agency Research

In summary, consumers:

- wanted front of pack labelling, especially on certain composite processed foods
- liked separate information on key nutrients
- found traffic light colour coding easy to understand and use
- wanted additional numerical information on amount of nutrient in a serving
- preferred formats with traffic light colours

### Agency Signposting Recommendations

Provide information on 7 categories of processed foods based on four core principles:

- Provide separate information on **fat, saturated fat, sugars** and **salt**. Information on calories and/or GDAs can also be given as an optional extra.
- Use **red, amber** or **green** colour coding to indicate whether levels of these nutrients are **high, medium** or **low**.
- Use nutritional criteria developed by the FSA to determine the colour code.
- Give information on the levels of nutrients in a portion of the product.

### Adopters and Supporters of Traffic Light Labelling

Approach has been adopted by:

- 8 retailers
- 26 manufacturers
- 5 service providers
- 1 restaurant/caterer

### Public Supporters of the Agency's Recommendations

<b>Health Groups and Medical and Professional Bodies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>British Dietetics Association</li> <li>British Heart Foundation</li> <li>British Medical Association</li> <li>Cancer Research UK</li> <li>Diabetes UK</li> <li>National Heart Forum</li> <li>Royal College of GPs</li> <li>Royal College of Nurses</li> <li>Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health</li> <li>Royal College of Physicians</li> <li>The Stroke Association</li> <li>UK Public Health Association</li> </ul>	<b>Consumer Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Federation of Women's Institutes</li> <li>National Consumer Council</li> <li>Scottish Consumer Council</li> <li>Netmums</li> <li>The Office of the Children's Commissioner</li> <li>Which?</li> </ul> <b>Enforcement Bodies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chartered Institute of Environmental Health</li> <li>Trading Standards Institute</li> </ul>
---	---

### Impact of Traffic Light Signposting on Sales (June 07)

- Sainsbury's compared sales of products within food categories over 12-week periods before traffic lights were introduced and after and found:
  - Customers switching to products with more greens and ambers and less reds
  - In the overall shop:
    - 10% increase in sales of healthier products
    - 12% decrease in sales of less healthy products

### What our consumers say

Healthy foods can be found in any supermarket - it is up to the individual to look for them. I like the traffic light system Sainsbury's uses - whereby I can tell at a glance

Colour Coding takes less time when busy shopping

Everyone knows the traffic light colour system - easier to see at a glance

Because you can see at a glance...the greener the healthier

The colour code is a far faster way to chose

### It's changing customer behaviour

#### Sainsbury's Ready Meal Case Study

- Healthier ready meals have seen growth more than double that of less healthy ready meals

Product	Sales Change (%)
Fresh Ready Meals category	26.2%
Be Good to Yourself Easy Steam Salmon and Tarragon (mostly Green on MTL)	46.1%
Taste The Difference Moussaka (mostly Red on MTL)	-24%

Against a comparable 12week corresponding period, fresh Ready Meals category sales grew by 26.2%. Be Good To Yourself Easy Steam Salmon and Tarragon, which had mostly Green as its main MTL colour, saw a sales increase of 46.1% - up 20% against the category. The Taste the Difference Moussaka, which has Red as its main colour, saw sales decrease by 24%, which was a 50% reduction against the category on a 12week corresponding comparison.

### It's changing customer behaviour

#### Sainsbury's Sandwiches Case Study<sup>1</sup>

- Healthier sandwiches lines sold 30% more than less healthy lines with the multiple traffic light labelling
- For example, against a comparable 12 week corresponding period, sandwich category sales were -9.4%.
  - Be Good To Yourself Salmon and Cucumber, which had mostly Green as its main colour, saw a sales increase of 5.8%. This was therefore 15% up on the overall category sales.
  - The All Day Breakfast, which had mostly Red as its main colour, saw a sales decrease of 44.3% (-35% against the category)

<sup>1</sup> Research methodology - To ensure influencing factors such as price or advertising in store did not affect the research results, those products with promotions/advertising attached were removed from the research. The research compared a 12 week period before the MTL was applied to products to a corresponding later 12 week period in which the MTL was evident on the front of packaging).

### A tool for re-development of products

www.food.gov.uk

#### Chicken and Bacon Bake

Per serving	Previous	New
Calories (Kcal)	666	568
Fat (g)	26.4	19.2
Saturated Fat (g)	16.4	12
Total sugars (g)	6	1.6
Salt (g)	2.3	1.9

#### Basics Ready Salted Crisps

Per serving	Previous	New
Calories (Kcal)	107	88
Fat (g)	7.2	4.6
Saturated Fat (g)	1.9	0.7
Total sugars (g)	0.1	0.1
Salt (g)	0.3	0.2

### Independent Signpost Labelling Evaluation

www.food.gov.uk

**Objective:** "to evaluate the impact of front of pack signpost labelling schemes on purchasing behaviour and consumer knowledge"

**Aim:** to establish which front of pack labelling scheme(s), or which combination of elements of schemes, best facilitate the accurate interpretation of key nutritional information by consumers such that they are enabled to make informed choices about the foods they purchase.

#### Colour coded GDA

SERVES 1 - THIS PACK PROVIDES					
CALLS	SUGAR	FAT	SAFFRAN	SALT	
360	10.8g	13.2g	8g	2g	
18%	12%	19%	40%	33%	

OF YOUR GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNT

#### Monochrome GDA

A pack provides...					
304	5.2g	9.2g	4.8g	1.5g	
Calories	Sugar	Fat	Saturates	Salt	
15%	5.8%	13%	24%	25%	

of your guideline daily amount

#### Traffic lights

ALL 100g	PER 100g
Fat 21%	
Saturates 11%	
Salt 2.8%	
Sugars 9.5%	
Calories 471	

### Aims of the study

www.food.gov.uk


- To understand how consumers use FOP labels in real life contexts.
- To test comprehension of FOP labels.




www.food.gov.uk

### Process


- Development & scoping Jan '07
- First phase fieldwork May '08
- **Partial analysis**
- **Development of second phase**
- Second phase fieldwork Sept - Dec '08
- Analysis & report – Spring 2009



www.food.gov.uk




**Selected findings from first phase**  
BMRB September 2008



www.food.gov.uk

### Objectives of the first phase


- Understand how FOP labels actually used when shopping
- to understand how FOP labels are used for meal planning at home
- To inform design of second stage



www.food.gov.uk

### Methods

- **100 accompanied shops** – ‘talk aloud’ while shopping (Decision making process in retail environment.)
- **50 in-store bag shopping audits** (Check observer effect)
- **50 in-home shopping bag audits** FOP label users - (Use of FOP labels in purchasing decisions & meal planning.)




www.food.gov.uk




**Findings.....**




www.food.gov.uk




**FOP labels valued**



www.food.gov.uk




Some sources of confusion



www.food.gov.uk

- Application of GDAs
- GDA calculations
- Portion sizes
  - 'normal'?
  - portion or product?
- Are all colours traffic light signals?



www.food.gov.uk

### Next stage

- Main fieldwork September – December 08.
- Final report combining both stages – Spring 09.
- Will be peer-reviewed



www.food.gov.uk

### Summary

- Strong consumer demand for information on key nutrients on front of pack (FIND, READ)
- Some debate over which nutrients
- Extensive debate over interpretive element (USE)
- UK Government recommends use of traffic light colours, based on extensive consumer research
- Independent comparative analysis with stakeholder input is examining what works best for consumers



www.food.gov.uk

### Contact us

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)  
[www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)

[rosemary.hignett@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rosemary.hignett@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

