

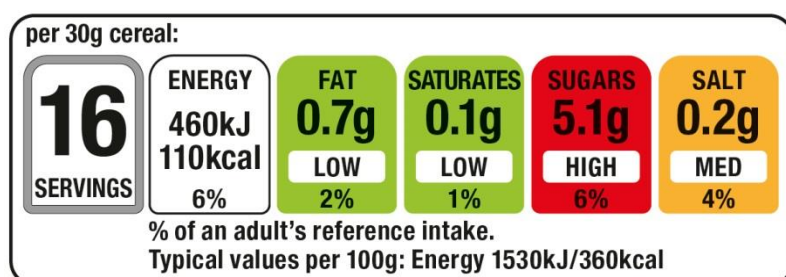
Briefing

Colour coded nutrition labelling - the facts

There is a lot of debate about the use of colour coding as part of national nutrition labelling schemes within the EU. The UK has recently introduced a voluntary national scheme which is based on the requirements set out in the EU Food Information to Consumers Regulations (FIRs). This briefing explains the scheme and why consumer organisations across Europe strongly support it.

1. A consumer-friendly scheme

The UK scheme provides nutrition information for energy, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt as set out in the EU Regulations. Information on the amount per portion is provided and how much this contributes to the Reference Intake (%RI) as prescribed in the FIRs. Additional interpretation of the significance of these nutrient levels is provided in the form of colour coding (red, amber and green) to indicate whether the levels are low, medium or high per 100g, relative to dietary guidelines. The thresholds for use of the colours is aligned with the EU definition for 'low' as set out in the EU Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation. The 'high' threshold is based on 25% of the RI set out in the FIRs, with 'medium' falling in-between. Some flexibility of presentation for different branding is permitted. An example of how the scheme appears on pack is shown below.



2. Supported by consumer research

The scheme is supported by independent consumer research in the UK conducted by the Food Standards Agency, as well as Which?, the UK consumer organisation. Research by other consumer organisations across the EU (eg. France, Netherlands, Greece) has also found it to

Which? is a consumer champion
We work to make things better for consumers. Our advice helps them make informed decisions. **Our campaigns make people's lives fairer, simpler and safer.**
Our services and products put consumers' needs first to bring them better value.

www.which.co.uk

Which?
2 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 4DF
t 020 7770 7000 f 0207 7770 7600
www.which.co.uk



be the best scheme for consumers, helping consumers to make healthier choices and ultimately reduce the burden of obesity and diet-related disease on health systems and EU economies.

3. A voluntary scheme

The UK scheme is a voluntary scheme and is therefore not an EU trade barrier. All major retailers use it on their own-label products and many have been using it since 2006. Some manufacturers (eg. Pepsico and Nestlé) will voluntarily include it on their branded products this year. The scheme is primarily aimed at processed foods, enabling consumers to choose between products such as ready meals and snacks that can have unexpected levels of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt and where healthier alternatives are available. The scheme enables consumers to see at a glance which product is a healthier option if they want to choose one.

4. Focused on nutrient levels not food quality

The scheme is not about food quality. Other information enables consumers to choose products on this basis. The scheme provides factual information about the amount of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt products contain. It does not tell consumers whether or not to eat particular foods over others, but enables an informed choice about the nutrients of most public health significance.

5. Part of a wider nutrition strategy

A range of actions are needed to help consumers make healthier choices as part of the solution to the obesity crisis facing Europe. This includes looking at the availability and choice of products on offer. The colour coded nutrition label has to be set in the context of wider nutrition education, information and food advice to consumers.

For more information, contact:

Sue Davies on 00 44 20 7770 7274, Sue.Davies@which.co.uk

Michelle Smyth, 00 44 20 7770 7755, Michelle.Smyth@which.co.uk

JANUARY 2014