

# **Citizens' forums on food: Front of Pack (FoP) Nutrition Labelling**

**Prepared for: Food Standards Agency**

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## Executive Summary

BMRB was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to conduct a nationwide series of 'citizens forums', with the goal of establishing an ongoing dialogue with the public on food standards. Now in its second year, this wave of forums sought to examine consumers' relationship with food labels, their awareness and understanding of front of pack (FoP) nutrition labelling and the effects a standardised FoP nutrition label scheme would have on them and on the food industry. The evening workshops took place in England and Scotland between September and October 2009.

### Food labels - Awareness and utilisation

Respondents were familiar with a wide range of labels used on food packaging and thought that this was an important tool which consumers could use to make informed decisions about the food that they purchased. Respondents thought that consumers had a right to know what was in their food, so whilst they did not always need the labels it was necessary for them to be there on the occasions that they did need information.

Food labels conveyed a range of different types of information to consumers about nutritional content, dietary advice, cooking and storage instructions value for money and its quality. While this information was important for all consumers respondents thought that it was particularly important for those who had specific dietary requirements or allergies, parents who bought and prepared food for their children and consumers who were dieting. This information had become increasingly important over time as modern lifestyles had resulted in a reliance on pre-prepared foods.

Point of choice was when respondents thought consumers were most likely to make the most use of food labels, as after the decision to purchase was taken, consumers were unlikely to change their mind about eating a product. However, even after purchasing the product, consumers were perceived to make use of labels at home. Best before, sell-by and use-by dates had an influence on whether to consume a product and respondents also made use of cooking and storage instructions.

At the point of choice, the shopping occasion was an important factor in the use of labels. During the weekly shop, consumers generally purchased the same products each week and were therefore unlikely to spend much time looking at labels unless they were considering buying a new product.

While 'eating on the go' consumers needed to fulfil an immediate need for food. Therefore, carefully planning their diet on these occasions was not perceived to be a top priority if it cost time. Informational short cuts became the most

frequently utilised form of labelling in these instances, as this enabled consumers to make fact based decisions on their food very quickly.

### **FoP nutrition labelling - Awareness and utilisation**

Respondents had a broad awareness of front of pack (FoP) labelling schemes; this awareness varied widely in the extent that respondents had actually engaged with FoP nutritional information. As such, awareness did not always translate into full understanding or actual usage of FoP nutrition labels. Those who reported limited prior awareness of FoP nutrition labels generally divided into those with no interest in nutritional information or healthy eating, and those who would use FoP if they were more widely publicised and explained to consumers.

Usage of FoP nutrition labels was somewhat lower than awareness and often inconsistent. Usage varied due to a wide range of factors, including: whether the individual was doing their 'weekly shop' or buying food to eat on the go, time pressure, mood, and the type of products being purchased. Respondents identified three groups for whom FoP nutrition labelling was felt to be particularly useful; parents shopping for their children, those interested in dieting and weight loss; and those without the time to cook from scratch who ate a lot of processed and convenience foods.

FoP nutrition labels were largely perceived as useful when making comparisons between products rather than assessing the nutritional value of a single item. Respondents thought that once FoP nutrition labels were widely understood, consumers would be drawn to them as a way of making quick and informed decisions.

### **Effectiveness of FoP nutrition labels and multiple schemes**

Respondents discussed a range of different FoP nutrition labelling schemes and the individual features which they found more or less helpful in making decisions. These discussions revealed that consumers have a wide variety of different preferences for how FoP nutrition labelling information should be presented for ease of use. However, they recognised that their own preferences might not suit others. Respondents also had varying confidence in terms of numeracy and the manipulation of numerical information to make comparisons.

Respondents supported the use of FoP nutrition labels which included nutrient amounts expressed in different ways. The traffic light colour scheme was popular as this was seen both as a way to make quick decisions at a glance, and as a way to bypass the need to make any mathematical calculations for those who struggled with numeracy or simply found numerical information intimidating.

There were mixed views on how important FoP nutrition labelling was to consumers. Respondents identified several potential benefits; FoP was seen as a

way to **save time and make informed healthy decisions**. Some felt that the labels offered **a convenient way to identify healthier products**, and therefore could potentially encourage more consumers to take an interest in healthy eating. In the longer term it was seen having the **potential to encourage healthier choices**, particularly when combined with food education for young people.

FoP was seen as particularly important in the context of consumers' increased consumption of convenience foods; a useful way to make informed comparisons between a range of ready meals with widely varying nutrient values. It was also regarded as useful for those with specific dietary requirements to keep track of their consumption of nutrients listed on the FoP nutrition label.

There was some surprise that FoP nutrition labelling provision was a voluntary step taken by retailers and manufacturers rather than a legal requirement forcing them to display it on their packaging. This led some respondents to ask that the scheme be made mandatory in view of its importance to public health. At present, food retailers and manufacturers use a variety of different FoP nutrition labelling systems to display nutritional information in a range of formats and respondents tended to view this as a barrier to wider usage of FoP nutrition labels. Respondents thought that the number of different FoP schemes served to undermine consumer trust, as retailers and manufacturers designed FoP nutrition labelling schemes themselves to best represent their own interests rather than those of consumers.

The range of different schemes was felt to make comparisons between products from different retailers and manufacturers more complicated. Having information presented in different formats was seen as inconvenient for making comparisons between retailers and manufacturers using different standards and potentially discouraging, particularly for those with a low confidence in their ability to manipulate numbers. For example, one FoP nutrition label might report nutrient amounts in grams while the other shows amounts only as a percentage of GDA.

Overall, it was felt that accurate and clear FoP nutrition labelling had the potential to help consumers make informed healthy choices. Furthermore, respondents felt that once consumers fully understood the information presented on FoP nutrition labels they would be better equipped to identify the potentially misleading aspects of product presentation and marketing.

### **Adopting a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme**

Respondents thought that FoP nutrition labelling would be easier to use and more effective if a standardised scheme was adopted by all supermarkets and manufacturers. This was particularly true of consumers who considered that interpreting and trying to compare several different FoP systems was time-consuming and therefore inconvenient to use. There was a perception that

introducing a standardised FoP label would be **easier to understand** and therefore **more convenient** for consumers. In addition, the increased prevalence of the standardised scheme across supermarkets and accompanying marketing would result in an **increased awareness** among consumers

Respondents were shown a range of examples of FoP nutrition labels, including integrated FoP nutrition labels (with traffic light colours), labels which used monochrome and labels which used pastel colours. Respondents' discussion of these labels, and other examples they were aware of, indicated that it was considered important that FoP labelling contained nutritional information for consumers who were trying to lose weight or who had special dietary requirements. In addition, the traffic light colour scheme and the words high, medium and low, were also important as it enabled consumers to easily interpret the nutritional information.

### **Influence of a standardised, integrated FoP nutrition label on food choices**

It was thought that introducing a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label might have an effect on consumers' food choices for the following 3 reasons.

1. Consumers would find it **easier to notice** the information provided as it would be presented in the same format and position on each item.
2. Consumers might consider a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label to be **more transparent** as respondents perceived that portion sizes and the boundaries between red, orange and green would be decided by the FSA rather than by individual supermarkets and manufacturers.
3. The increased prevalence of the standardised scheme across supermarkets would result in an **increased awareness** among consumers.

Respondents recognised that there might be some consumers who had very little interest in maintaining a healthy diet and therefore the integrated scheme would have little impact on their behaviour. However, respondents thought that introducing the integrated scheme would be more consumer friendly for those who find food labelling confusing, and help to ensure that consumers could choose whether to use FoP nutrition labelling rather than their confusion discouraging them. Respondents thought that introducing the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme would have the greatest influence on consumers who found the existence of multiple schemes confusing. It would also encourage more use within this group.

When asked about the influence this might have on behaviour respondents thought that the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme would **help** consumers make choices based on nutritional information and to recognise products with



high levels of nutrients because it was easy to interpret. Respondents also thought that the integrated label might reduce the influence of other factors on food choices. For example consumers might be less likely to make judgements about health based on packaging and marketing. It may also encourage consumers to make choice based on healthiness rather than habit.

### **How can industry be encouraged to adopt a single scheme?**

Respondents perceived that consumers could influence industry through their shopping habits. However, they recognised that consumer influence in isolation might be not be sufficient to encourage industry to adopt a single scheme as consumer campaigns on their own may not gain broad enough support from other consumers.

It was felt that there may be a role for government and the FSA in educating consumers about the integrated FoP nutrition label to raise awareness about the scheme and how it would help consumers make healthier choices more easily. Television and radio were considered effective as most consumers were exposed to these channels. More detailed information could be delivered via the internet.

### **Advantages and disadvantages for industry**

Participants thought the key advantage for industry in adopting the integrated scheme would be in creating a 'level playing field' by enabling consumers to make fair comparisons with competitor's brands. They felt the key disadvantage would be that consumers may buy fewer items with high nutrient values. However, respondents felt that these items would not be excluded from consumers' diets and there was a perception that there might be scope for manufacturers and supermarkets to reformulate products to reduce high nutrient levels.

Overall, participants thought the benefits for the consumer of introducing a standardised FoP nutrition labelling scheme would outweigh any disadvantages for industry. Respondents thought that promoting consumers' health and helping consumers to make healthier choices were more important than the risk associated with a drop in profits while people's purchasing habits readjusted to the provision of this new information.

# Introduction

In December 2005, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board agreed to develop more creative and experimental ways of engaging directly with individual consumers and to construct a new model for consumer engagement. Central to this aim was the establishment of a nationwide series of consumer forums to enable the FSA to establish an ongoing dialogue with the public on food standards.

The forums provide the opportunity for the FSA to innovate in the way it makes decisions to protect public health and consumer interests in relation to food safety. In particular, the forums help to frame issues the FSA focuses on, and ultimately the advice its gives, from a consumer perspective.

Specifically, the forums aim to:

- Understand the “top of mind” concerns of UK consumers.
- Develop deeper understanding about particular concerns that consumers have in relation to food.
- Test FSA policy and ensure that the views of consumers are taken into account at all stages of the policy making process.

This report outlines findings from year two of the citizens’ forums, exploring attitudes towards whether front of pack (FoP) nutrition labels on certain food products are assisting consumers to make informed choices. The report also examines consumer awareness and understanding of FoP nutrition labels.

## Research Aims and Approach

The following aims were identified for the research:

- To establish context by exploring consumer awareness and usage of food labelling in general.
- To explore consumer awareness of FoP nutrition labelling and the aspects of FoP nutrition labels which aided, or detracted from, understanding and ease of use.
- To explore the potential impact of introducing a single standardised FoP nutrition labelling scheme across all retailers and manufacturers.

- To understand respondents' perceptions of how individuals can influence FOP label adoption by industry.

The approach adopted to address the aims involved a series of four workshops across four areas of the UK, convened over two waves. Each workshop comprised 10 participants and lasted 90 minutes.

The discussions in the first wave of forums, developed in relation to a topic guide (see appendix 2), specifically explored the following areas:

- General discussion of food labelling and respondents' awareness and usage of various labelling features.
- Views on FoP nutrition labelling and what sorts of information it should contain.
- Respondents' prior awareness and experiences of using FoP nutrition labelling.
- Whether FoP nutrition labelling influences purchasing decisions.
- A comparison exercise exploring how respondents used FoP nutrition labels when comparing similar products.

The second wave examined the issue of FoP nutrition labelling in greater detail and explored the following areas:

- Views on the introduction of a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme across all retailers and manufacturers and manufacturers.
- Views on the influence of marketing and other elements of packaging besides FoP nutrition labels on consumers' assessment of the nutritional value of a product.
- Views on the likely level of public demand for a standardised FoP nutrition scheme.

Each group was moderated by an independent facilitator, and representatives from the FSA were also present, both observing and adding clarification in discussions where respondents required it. Stimulus materials were used to aid discussion and provoke debate (see appendix 3). The findings were subject to a full analysis, which forms the basis for this report. A full methodology can be found in appendix 1.

## **Report Outline:**

The next section of this report seeks to understand respondents' level of awareness and usage of food labelling in general. Chapter two looks at participants' awareness of front FoP nutrition labelling and how it is used to help inform consumer choices. Chapter three examines respondents' views of the particular aspects of FoP nutrition labels which help or hinder their understanding, and the effect of multiple FoP nutrition schemes. Chapter four then discusses the potential impact of a move to a standardised FoP nutrition labelling scheme and Chapter five explores consumers' role in encouraging industry to adopt a standardised scheme. Finally, chapter six pulls together the findings from both workshops and explores the implications for the FSA.

## 1 Food labels – awareness and utilisation

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At the start of the first workshop respondents were asked to describe the different types of labels that they were aware of and had used while shopping. Respondents described a wide range of labels which had varying levels of use and influence depending on the type of product under consideration, its intended purpose and whether it was being purchased for themselves or someone else.

There were a number of reasons why respondents thought that the information provided on labels was important for consumers. However, the rational most frequently given in support of labelling, was that consumers had a right to know exactly what food producers were putting into their food. Labelling on food packaging was the only practical method of doing this and while consumers would not need to make use of all of the information contained on packaging all of the time, it was necessary for it to be available on the occasions they did need it.

*If you don't need to look at it, then don't look at it. But if it isn't there and you want to obtain it, that's a different story [...] It should be there just if you need it, if you want to know about it  
(London, Female)*

Based on the way that respondents made use of the information available; labels can be grouped into five categories: dietary advice, instructional, informational, marketing, and nutritional values. These categories were of differing levels of importance to consumers depending on their personal circumstances. For example labels showing information about price or value for money were invaluable for shoppers on tight budgets while food allergy advice was important for those with specific dietary requirements. The labels which respondents indicated that they made use of most frequently were cooking and storage instructions, best before, use by and sell by dates. Respondents thought consumers valued anything that helped them understand how to store and cook food and therefore these were regarded as very helpful.

The table below gives details on these labels and the categories into which they fall.

**Table 1.1 – Respondents awareness of the information provided on food labels**

Nutritional values and ingredients	Dietary advice	Instructional	Informational short cuts	Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calories</li> <li>• Sugar</li> <li>• Salt</li> <li>• Fat</li> <li>• Saturated fat</li> <li>• Additives</li> <li>• Preservatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food allergy advice</li> <li>• Vegetarian</li> <li>• Weight watchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storage instructions</li> <li>• Cooking instructions</li> <li>• Sell / use by / best before</li> <li>• Recipe ideas and serving suggestions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Origin</li> <li>• Value for money offers</li> <li>• Fair trade</li> <li>• Traffic lights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand</li> <li>• Product description</li> <li>• Product imagery</li> <li>• Specific health claims</li> </ul>

As well as **nutritional values** relating to calories, sugar, salt, fat and saturated fat respondents were also interested in the **ingredients**, such as any additives or preservatives that went into the food that they bought. There was a perception among respondents that a healthy diet was one that took all of these values into account when making decisions about what to purchase. While those who were dieting were particularly interested in the levels of fat and calories in specific items, parents and carers were particularly concerned about the effects of artificial additives and preservatives on their children. Therefore, for these respondents, a healthy diet was one that also avoided these ingredients when they felt it was necessary.

*I have got a grandson who is very, very hyperactive. [...] If you give him [a popular fizzy drink] that has lots of additives in it tends to affect his behaviour [...] so we need to make sure that those sorts of additives aren't in his diet. (Nottingham, Male)*

Respondents thought that information related to **dietary advice** was most relevant to those people who had specific dietary requirements either because of an allergy or an illness such as diabetes. These labels were perceived to be extremely important for these consumers who would rely heavily on the information contained within these labels whilst shopping in order to ensure that the food they bought was appropriate for their needs. Additionally these labels were important for those consumers who avoided certain products because of a lifestyle choice such as being vegetarian or because they were dieting.

Respondents perceived that changes in consumers' eating habits and busier lifestyles had led people to relying more frequently on pre-prepared meals in their

diet. The perception was that this had led to a general decline in cooking skills and it was necessary therefore to provide explicit **instructional** information on labels about how consumers should store and prepare the pre-prepared food that they buy.

Respondents thought that these changes were also instrumental in creating a society in which rising levels of obesity and diet related illness were the norm. In this environment, labels were increasingly important in order to ensure that consumers were able to make informed decisions about the food they bought and consumed. **Informational short cuts** were therefore a key way in which respondents thought consumers could gather important information about food quickly and easily in order to help them make decisions. Where packaging displayed information about the price or contained offers, such as two for the price of one, consumers could use this as visual shorthand to make a quick assessment if a product represented value for money. Other labels such as origin, fair trade or the traffic light front of pack labels were thought to help them to make similarly quick decisions about the quality or nutritional status benefits of the product.

*We had Chicken Garam Massala tonight, but that is because I spotted the [reduced price of the] ginger [...] and I thought 'Well, I use that' so that really decided what we ate tonight.  
(Bradford, Female)*

In the same way, respondents used **marketing** on packaging, such as brand information, product descriptions and images, in order to judge whether the product was of a high quality and nutritious. They also made use of phrases which stood out on the front of packaging in order to make judgements about how healthy a product was. Terms such as 'low fat' or 'no added sugar' were frequently referenced but respondents were suspicious that these statements could possibly obscure other, less beneficial qualities, such as high levels of salt or natural sugars.

### **1.1 When do consumers use food labels?**

There were two occasions when respondents thought that consumers would usually make use of food labels: at the point of choice and at home. The point of choice was thought to be the time at which consumers made the most use of food labels, as after the decision to purchase was taken, consumers were unlikely to change their mind about eating a product, regardless of what the label said.

However, respondents did use instructional information on food labels when they got home. Best before, sell-by and use-by dates were used as one method for consumers to make judgements about food and could have an influence on whether to consume a product. This depended on the length of time that had

elapsed since the 'expiry' date and whether a visual inspection indicated that the product was safe to eat.

Cooking and storage instructions were also identified as labels that consumers were likely to use after they had got their food home. Respondents said that, in the case of products that were purchased irregularly, they used the labels to see how the food should be stored, if it could be frozen and for how long, or to assess how to cook the product.

Decisions made at the point of choice about the information contained on food labels varied depending on the type of shopping occasion.

When doing the weekly shop, respondents thought that consumers were likely to be hurrying in order to complete the task as quickly as possible. Consumers generally purchased the same products week after week, only purchasing different products occasionally. Respondents thought that in the mind of the consumer, the fact that the product had been consumed on multiple occasions meant that it had satisfied their personal standards and the ingredients and their source did not matter as much as would be the case for a new product.

*If you are used to the same stuff you have read the labels once so you know what's in it (Bradford, Male)*

As a consequence they were unlikely to spend much time looking at labelling unless they were considering buying a new product which were untried by them.

Respondents thought that labels would be less likely to matter to consumers who were 'eating on the go' than when they did the weekly shop. While shopping for products such as pre-packed sandwiches, salads and snack bars, consumers would likely be in a hurry, fulfilling an immediate need for food in order to let them continue about their business, rather than carefully planning their diet. They would therefore have less time to seek out more appropriate alternatives instead employing a 'that will do' attitude.

Informational short cuts became the most frequently utilised form of labelling in these instances, as this enabled consumers to make fact based decisions very quickly. Respondents said that they had used FoP nutrition labelling to make quick comparisons between two products while eating on the go in order to assess which was the 'healthier' of the two. However, respondents said that eating on the go frequently involved purchasing food from places such as fast food restaurants, deli bars and bakeries, where these informational short cuts were not available. Respondents realised that these occasions made it much more difficult to make informed decisions about the food they purchased.

*What about if you're in a takeaway shop or something?  
[Nutrition information] is not easy to access. [...] takeaways and*



*fast food restaurants is where you won't necessarily be able to think about it (London, Female)*

Respondents' perception of what defined a 'healthier' product was not necessarily based on the premise that products were either intrinsically unhealthy or healthy. Instead, respondents thought that consumers were likely to make a judgement on 'healthiness' based on whether a product contained a high proportion of a particular nutrient in relation to its function within the daily diet. For example, if a snack such as a chocolate bar, which might be expected to typically form a small part of a person's daily diet, contained a high proportion of a person's recommended saturated fat intake for that day, then a consumer would be likely to perceive it as 'unhealthy' whilst still realising that it could form part of a healthy diet.

However, where respondents were treating themselves and knew that the product was 'unhealthy' because it contained high levels of nutrients or additive, they tended to avoid looking at the labels.

Respondents thought the key influencing factor remained the price for all but the most affluent of consumers. Therefore, while other elements of the product, such as labelling, can have an impact on decision making, this needs to be understood in the context of cost as the critical driver of purchasing behaviour. Therefore, for most consumers, the price must be right if they are to consider purchasing the product.

## **1.2 What aspects influence the interpretation of labels?**

There were a number of aspects which consumers thought made it more difficult to understand food labelling. Often, respondents thought that the information on packaging was either too small to read easily or got lost among the other information contained on the packaging. Packaging that contained words which respondents did not understand or phrases whose significance was unclear, also caused confusion.

*Apparently, [this product] is a good source of fatty acids [...] but I don't really know if that's a good thing or not (Glasgow, Female)*

On the whole, respondents thought that the best labels were clear because they used bright colours which helped them stand out. They often contained strong, recognisable images which could be easily spotted and used quickly to inform decisions and they were standardised across multiple brands, products and supermarkets.

## 2 Front of pack (FoP) nutrition labelling - awareness and utilisation

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### 2.1 Awareness of FoP nutrition labelling

The following chapter examines levels of awareness and usage of Front of Pack (FoP) nutrition labelling, how respondents used FoP nutrition labelling, and its perceived value to consumers.

All respondents were aware of at least one type of FoP nutrition labelling. This varied, from a vague awareness of FoP nutritional information being available but without any specific knowledge, to a full understanding of the various features and range of FoP nutrition labelling systems currently in use.

Awareness of the full range of different FoP nutrition labelling systems was more limited among respondents who tended to cook from scratch, as these individuals tended to buy fresh ingredients without FoP nutrition labels. Those who only shopped in one supermarket chain were more likely to only be aware of that retailer's particular scheme. The point was also raised in Bradford that some Asian consumers tended to source much of their food from smaller local suppliers which stocked products imported for this specific market, in this case there were few or no FoP nutrition labels on food products.

Most respondents had prior awareness of a range of different FoP systems and features. In no particular order, they had noticed:

- The different colour schemes currently in use (traffic light colours/ monochrome/pastel).
- Schemes listing nutrient amounts in grams;
- Schemes listing nutrient amounts as a percentage of guideline daily amount (GDA);
- FoP nutritional information presented in different shapes such as a wheel or circle shape;
- Text provided alongside traffic light colours (low/medium/high).

Interest in FoP nutrition labels tended to be lower among those who consistently purchased the same products from week to week. Their purchases were familiar and if the individual was interested in nutritional information this had generally been checked before, it was not seen as necessary to check again with each subsequent purchase of a product.

Some respondents had little interest in health or nutrition and therefore didn't feel the need to check labelling. This lack of interest was explained in terms of health and fitness being a personal choice. Younger respondents often felt that it was unnecessary to watch what they ate as they tended to stay slim without any considerable effort. However, for these individuals, emphasis tended to be placed on being slim rather than broader considerations related to health and fitness or eating a balanced diet.

*"I am young; I just pick up everything and if it looks nice on the packet I stick it in the trolley (laughter)" (Nottingham, Female)*

Others had an awareness of FoP nutrition labels but had not considered them in any detail prior to the workshops. Those respondents with limited awareness could be divided into two groups; those who simply had no interest in FoP nutritional information, and those who would make use of FoP if it was brought to their attention and its usage explained.

## **2.2 Usage of FoP nutrition labels**

While overall awareness of FoP nutrition labelling was relatively high, actual usage among respondents was somewhat lower and inconsistent from one day to the next. While they may check FoP in detail one day, they might ignore it completely the next. Among those who did make use of FoP nutrition labels, inconsistency was caused by a range of factors, including: fluctuating levels of interest in healthy eating, time pressure, mood whilst shopping, and the type of products purchased. For example, respondents could be tired and in a hurry, feeling upset and buying food as a treat, or shopping with young children in tow. It was common for respondents to go through phases of taking physical exercise and paying more attention to their diet and then go through periods of being less concerned.

*"Sometimes I go and just put everything in the trolley. Some days I may look at the labels, I don't know." (Female, Bradford)*

Price and taste were central factors influencing purchasing decisions for many respondents. While some respondents had little or no interest in healthy eating, it was perceived that many consumers are increasingly health conscious and that FoP nutrition labelling was a response to this demand.

*"Some people want this; some people want to know exactly what's in their food, so I suppose you want to tell those people what's in the food." (Male, Bradford)*

Familiarity with a food product was another important influence, FoP nutrition labels were rarely checked for regular or habitual purchases. While the label may have been checked once, when the consumer first bought the product, they were

unlikely to check again in future and any subsequent changes to the nutritional content of the product would likely go unnoticed unless specifically highlighted on the product packaging.

### **2.2.1 How respondents used FoP nutritional information**

When assessing the nutritional value of a product, respondents were focussed on the nutrients already found on FoP nutrition labels (sugar, sat fat, fat, and salt) as well as the overall calorific content. However, there was considerable variation in the way respondents approached the information when making decisions. While some tried to judge the overall nutritional balance of a purchase, others tended to pay particular attention to the levels of one or two nutrients and use these as a proxy for the perceived overall 'healthiness' of the product. For example, saturated fat might be of particular concern for one individual, while for others there was a focus on salt or sugar levels. Rather than look at the overall balance of nutrients, individuals simply checked that their proxy nutrients were at a level they found acceptable. This was sometimes related to medical advice to cut down intake of a specific nutrient, alternatively it was another way individuals attempted to further simplify the decision making process.

Respondents also varied in their approach to assessing the level of a nutrient in a product; variously relying on nutrient amounts presented in grams, or percentage of guideline daily amount (GDA), or by using the label's traffic light colours where these were available. Respondents tended to use information presented in their preferred format to make judgements and were often put off by labels that displayed information in unfamiliar ways or which lacked the particular informational element that they preferred.

Respondents tended to focus on the usefulness of FoP labels in enabling them to quickly make healthier choices when comparing a range of similar products. The labels were felt to be of particular relevance when comparing pre-prepared sauces, ready meals and other 'convenience foods'. These products were viewed as likely to be 'less healthy' than cooking at home from scratch with fresh ingredients. On the other hand it was felt that convenience foods were increasingly a part of consumers' diet given the pressures of increasingly hectic lifestyles. Therefore, providing quickly accessible nutritional information on these products was seen as increasingly important.

Usage varied depending on the type of shopping respondents were doing; there were considerable differences between shopping for food to **eat on the go**, and the main **weekly shop** to stock up at home.

The **weekly shop** was felt to largely involve habitual purchases of familiar products. Considering time pressures and the stress of shopping, especially with young children, it was seen as unrealistic to expect consumers to look at FoP

nutrition labelling in detail on these occasions. As such, FoP use was largely limited to choosing between convenience foods or assessing unfamiliar products.

When buying food to **eat on the go**, it was seen as more practical for consumers to make use of FoP nutritional information. Unlike the weekly shop, respondents were buying a small number of products for a single meal or snack. These purchases tended to be sandwiches and other prepared items purchased from supermarkets. Some respondents had noticed FoP nutrition information on fast food packaging but largely associated it with supermarket produce. Products purchased to eat on the go tended to be processed or convenience foods with widely varying nutritional values. As such it was seen as useful to make comparisons quickly using FoP nutrition labels to make a healthier choice from a wide range of options.

FoP use was largely restricted to point of purchase. Once at home respondents rarely returned to the front of pack information, it was felt that the FoP nutrition labels were used to screen purchases in store. Having assessed nutritional values of their purchases in store, once at home, respondents were generally more interested in use-by dates, storage and cooking instructions - as mentioned in chapter one. More exceptionally, respondents would double check FoP nutrition labels at home, either when cooking for others or trying to balance their daily diet.

Respondents identified some specific groups who would be more likely to use FoP nutritional information:

- **Parents shopping for food for children** tended to pay particular attention to healthy eating and FoP on these purchases than those specifically for their own consumption. It was seen as particularly important for children to have a balanced diet.
- It was also felt that FoP nutrition labels were of interest to **those seeking to diet and lose weight**. The labels offered a convenient way of keeping track of nutrients such as fats and sugars and were useful for those trying to monitor and control their calorie intake.
- **Those who normally cooked from scratch** tended to view FoP nutritional information as being aimed at those who eat processed and convenience foods. Most of their own purchases tended to be fresh single ingredients without FoP nutrition labels.

## **2.3 The importance of FoP nutrition labels to consumers**

There were mixed views on how important FoP nutrition labelling was to consumers. Respondents identified several potential benefits; FoP was seen as a

way to **save time and make informed healthy decisions**. Some felt that the labels offered **a convenient way to identify healthier products**, and therefore could potentially encourage more consumers to take an interest in healthy eating. In the longer term it was seen having the **potential to encourage healthier choices**, particularly when combined with food education for young people.

As mentioned in section 2.2.1 FoP was seen as particularly important in the context of consumers' increased consumption of convenience foods; a useful way to make informed comparisons between a range of ready meals with widely varying nutrient values. It was also regarded as useful for those with specific dietary requirements to keep track of their consumption of nutrients listed on the FoP nutrition label. However, it was seen as insufficient for those with a particular allergy or intolerance of an ingredient, or a concern relating to particular additives or preservatives if these were not listed on FoP nutrition labels.

On the whole, respondents expressed surprise that FoP nutrition labelling was a voluntary step taken by retailers and manufacturers rather than a legal requirement forcing them to display nutritional information on their packaging. Furnished with this knowledge, these respondents thought that the scheme should indeed be made mandatory in view of its importance to public health.

Respondents were often confused by the legal status of FoP nutritional labels and did not always make the distinction, between compulsory nutritional information provision on packaging, and the option of voluntarily offering additional front of pack labelling. Discussions highlighted the legislative complexity of making FoP nutritional labels a legal requirement, however, despite this complexity it was seen as desirable to legislate to enforce the same labelling standards across all major food retailers and manufacturers.

Despite this general support for a legally binding FoP nutrition labelling system, there was some concern that the introduction of a compulsory system would potentially create costs for manufacturers and retailers and manufacturers, which in turn would almost inevitably be passed on to consumers in the form of higher food prices. Therefore respondents sought reassurance that the costs involved in the introduction of FoP nutrition labelling would not lead to noticeably higher food bills. There was also a feeling from some respondents that it might be somewhat upsetting when FoP nutrition labels reveal our favourite foods to be less healthy than we had imagined, a sense that they would rather not know.

Among those who supported the use of FoP nutrition labels, there was a sense that some FoP systems were easier to use and understand than others and that the very existence of a range of different systems could potentially undermine consumer confidence in, and understanding of, FoP nutrition labels. There was also concern that those with poor numeracy and literacy skills could find certain numerical elements on the FoP - such as percentage of GDA or amounts of

nutrients in grams - difficult to manipulate and make comparisons with. These individuals lacked confidence in dealing with numbers and as such were likely to feel discouraged from using the labels or reach incorrect conclusions as to the nutritional value of a product when using them.

Most respondents saw the value of FoP nutrition labelling as a way to raise consumer awareness of the importance of nutrition. By making it quick and convenient to find and interpret the nutritional value of products while shopping, respondents hoped that more consumers would find it easier to eat healthily. This was seen as beneficial both to consumers and the government, potentially reducing incidences of obesity and diet related illnesses and reducing the burden these cases placed on healthcare resources.

*"I think if the idea is to reduce obesity, as it seems to be climbing and climbing and climbing then this is, you know, exactly what they need to do because diets are high in fat, especially saturated fat, and diets high in sugar and salt, they give you health problems" (Female, London)*

### **3 The effectiveness of Front of Pack Nutrition Labels**

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This section examines the barriers to understanding Front of Pack (FoP) information and the elements which respondents identified as important to consumers when making quick healthy decisions.

Before engaging with the specific informational elements given on the label, respondents emphasised the importance of positioning and visibility. The label should be prominently positioned with clear bold text and in colours that define it and stand out from the surrounding packaging. The emphasis was on producing a label that allows consumers to make quick decisions at a glance.

There was widespread support for FoP nutrition labels in principle; respondents saw it as a quick and convenient way to assess the nutritional value of a product. However, respondents also noted the variety of different schemes currently in use and restated the importance of presenting FoP nutritional information clearly, with numerical information so as to be accessible to as many consumers as possible. Some specific FoP features were felt to be potentially confusing to consumers:

Some respondents lacked an understanding of what was meant by 'guideline daily amount' (GDA) and how these figures should be used to assess the healthiness of a product. There was also some concern that GDA could vary between individuals, depending on a number of factors, including gender, age, weight and metabolism.

For respondents with low levels of numerical confidence, information presented in percentages was seen as difficult to use. This was often connected to a sense that calculations might be involved to keep track of GDA over the course of a day. These respondents supported giving GDA percentages on FoP nutrition labels despite not using the feature themselves as they felt it would be useful for other, more numerically able consumers. On the other hand, respondents who thought nutrients listed in grams lacked context felt more comfortable with nutrients listed as a percentage of GDA. These individuals felt that they were not sure how many grams constituted a healthy portion.

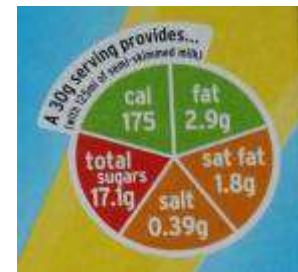
Systems using traffic light colours were not always seen as self explanatory. Some respondents had not previously used the traffic light colours to make decisions as they were not aware of the significance of the colour coding. Once the meaning of the traffic light colours had been explained it was seen as a useful and time saving feature. It was felt that schemes giving traffic light colours alongside supporting text reading, "High", "Medium", and "Low" could reinforce the meaning of the colour scheme for consumers.

In combination, traffic light colours and explanatory text were seen as a quick and easy to use alternative to more detailed information given in grams or as a



percentage of GDA. Respondents felt that this allowed consumers with low numeracy or short on time to make quick but informed decisions; those who were comfortable with a greater level of detail could use whichever format suited their needs, with emphasis placed either on speed (traffic lights) or more detailed consideration (GDA etc).

FoP nutrition labels that present information in the shape of a circle or 'wheel' were seen as potentially confusing. Respondents thought that consumers could mistake the segments of the circle for a pie chart, and as the segments are equal in size it could be thought to be showing a nutritionally balanced product. This could lead consumers to make false assumptions about the nutritional values of the product.



For those familiar with FoP systems which use traffic light colours to indicate the level of nutrients, alternative systems which used monochrome or pastel colours were often seen as confusing or even as deliberately misleading. In the case of pastel labels it was felt that consumers could potentially assume that the colours or their intensity conveyed similar messages to the traffic light system.



In the case of monochrome labels, it was felt that these tended to be less visible than other systems, often merging into the wider packaging, and could therefore be used where a retailer wanted to avoid drawing attention to the nutritional value of 'unhealthy' products.

Portion sizes caused some confusion and it was felt that nutritional values were sometimes presented in quantities difficult to relate to a 'realistic' portion. Some respondents felt that this amounted to deliberate manipulation on the part of retailers and manufacturers to mislead consumers. This was seen as a widespread problem affecting the food industry in general, respondents did not single out individual retailers and manufacturers but felt this was an important area for improvement to build trust in the accuracy of FoP nutrition labelling.

Older respondents said they were put off by the number of different FoP schemes currently in use and in some cases displayed a reluctance to engage with the metric measurements used. This group felt that they were unlikely to make the effort to understand and use FoP nutrition labels, feeling that they had managed without them in the past.

### 3.1 Where is it necessary to provide FoP nutritional information?

Between workshops, respondents were asked to take note of the FoP nutrition labels that they saw whilst shopping. When the groups met again, many respondents expressed their surprise at the number of products which didn't currently carry a FoP nutrition label.

*"I mean I have noticed it because I do look, but I didn't realise there was so many [products] without it." (Female, Nottingham)*

In some cases, such as fresh eggs, fruit and vegetables, it was considered unnecessary to provide FoP nutritional information as these products were seen as self evidently healthy. Views on the provision of FoP nutrition labels on products considered to be 'less healthy' were more varied. Respondents thought that in some cases the omission of FoP nutrition labelling on packaging was intended to detract attention from information which consumers may perceive negatively, such as particularly high sugar or fat content. This was felt to be motivated by food industry fears that sales would drop on some products if they carried FoP nutritional information which they considered would highlight the more 'negative' aspects of a product's nutrition.

*"They're trying to hide something. You know. They don't want to put the how much, you know, the percentage of this, that and the other on because the self-conscious people who are looking, well, with regards to their health, their diet and what have you, they'll pick it up and put it back down." (Male, Nottingham)*

There was also a sense that some foods were considered to be obviously unhealthy because of their high sugar, fat or salt content and should therefore be treated as occasional treats. These were typically thought to be products such as pies, cakes, biscuits and chocolate bars. Often these products carried no FoP nutrition label and some argued that FoP nutrition labelling should be compulsory on these 'unhealthy' foods.

There was more of a consensus on the importance of FoP nutrition labelling provision on those products that fell between these two 'obviously healthy or unhealthy' categories; a middle ground that varies between individuals but largely encompasses pre-prepared convenience foods, ready meals and products perceived to be highly processed. Food eaten while working was a good example of a meal viewed simply as fuel rather than as a treat, office workers in particular felt it was important to eat a healthy lunch, despite having the occasional extra treat.

*"I'll go into Marks and Spencer for lunch and I'll look and go oh look, all the green, yes, and there's one little amber one, that's*

*absolutely fine, I'm going to go for that one and then I'll go and pick up a bar of chocolate and won't look at all. [...] I'm trying to be good on my sandwich but there's no point in looking at the label on chocolate. I know chocolate is bad for you."* (Female, London)

Respondents primarily expected to find FoP nutrition labels on products in supermarkets and other major food retailers and manufacturers. These businesses were seen as having the financial resources to implement the labels on their products without a serious impact on their profits. There was some concern among respondents about the cost of implementing FoP nutrition labelling on food packaging and the financial burden this might put on smaller food businesses with limited resources to invest in major changes to their packaging. However, respondents did state that they felt a greater sense of trust in smaller local food businesses and would be less likely to expect FoP nutrition labels to be provided in their local butchers or deli.

### **3.2 The effect of multiple FoP schemes on consumer understanding**

At present, food retailers and manufacturers use a variety of different FoP nutrition labelling systems to display nutritional information in a range of formats and respondents tended to view this as a barrier to wider usage of FoP nutrition labels. Respondents thought that the number of different FoP schemes served to undermine consumer trust as retailers and manufacturers designed FoP nutrition labelling schemes themselves to best represent their own interests rather than those of consumers. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it was felt that some retailers and manufacturers had designed some features of their labels to disguise or play down the 'unhealthier' aspects of products.

There was confusion as to which organisation or body decided where the boundaries lay between the three traffic light bands. For example, who decided where the cut off point was for sugar content to be given a green, amber or red label? It was common for respondents to assume that these decisions were taken by food retailers and manufacturers themselves. The variety of different schemes tended to reinforce the idea that retailers and manufacturers were free to decide not only if they should use traffic light colours but also where the boundaries should lie for products to qualify for each band. As such, respondents thought it should be more widely publicised to consumers, that these decisions were taken by the Agency and not set by individual food businesses.

*"I don't know whether you know, but who sets whether they think it is high, medium or low? Whoever is producing the food, who says that the amount of sugar in that packet is medium or high? Do they look at every product?"* (Male, Bradford)

Some older respondents felt that they were unlikely to make the effort to learn all the different features of multiple schemes. They felt somewhat set in their ways and the complexity involved in understanding how to use all of the different schemes would ultimately result in them rejecting the use of FoP altogether.

The range of different schemes was felt to make comparisons between products from different retailers and manufacturers more complicated. Having information presented in different formats was seen as inconvenient for making comparisons between products using different standards and potentially discouraging, particularly for those with a low confidence in their ability to manipulate numbers. For example, one FoP nutrition label might report nutrient amounts in grams while the other shows amounts only as a percentage of GDA.

### **3.2.1 Trust and Transparency**

Despite respondents' reservations about the existence of multiple FoP nutrition labelling schemes and a broader distrust of big business, most respondents felt that they had to accept the accuracy of FoP nutritional information in good faith. There was an assumption that the government would ensure that all nutritional claims made on packaging were accurate and not misleading to consumers. As such it was assumed that the appropriate authorities were monitoring packaging to ensure that this was the case.

There was however a feeling that marketing on packaging could be used to mislead consumers and that FoP nutrition labels could potentially be manipulated in similar ways. While manipulation of portion sizes was seen as a specific example (discussed in section 3.0), this sense of suspicion was generally vague and appeared to relate to a more general distrust of big business; a perception that food retailers and manufacturers would put profit ahead of consumer nutrition unless they were encouraged or regulated to do otherwise.

## **3.3 The influence of packaging and marketing**

Respondents pointed out that FoP nutrition labels operate in a wider context on packaging and must compete for the consumer's attention alongside other informational and marketing elements. These features included, health and nutrition claims, branding (particularly supermarket's own 'healthy' ranges), imagery, special offers and the appearance of the product if visible through the packaging.

Branding and brand loyalty were seen as powerfully influential, particularly when aimed at impressionable children. Parents reported difficulty in substituting healthy alternatives once their children had become attached to a particular brand. It was seen as important to educate children so that they could make informed decisions and not be misled by marketing. Respondents felt that

branding on packaging could influence consumers' judgment of the healthiness of a product.

*"And people would often buy the better branded thing thinking it would be healthier. It is not always." (Male, Glasgow)*

In some cases, particularly with monochrome schemes, FoP nutrition labelling was felt to be too discrete and easily got lost among the other elements of the packaging.

Some respondents admitted that they sometimes relied on the general appearance of a product's packaging in order to assess healthiness, rather than look in detail at FoP nutritional information. In some cases, respondents were wary of the influence of specific health claims such as 'low in fat', 'no added sugar' or 'no artificial colourings or preservatives'. It was felt that these claims often highlighted a healthy aspect of a product while omitting the potentially negative aspects. The same was thought of product ranges marketed under a healthy eating or weight loss related branding. Respondents mentioned the example of jam marketed for diabetics; according to these respondents it was often better to buy jam labelled simply as 'low sugar' rather than brands aimed at diabetics, in the past they had compared these products and felt that they tended to contain more sugar, which respondents found surprising.

Imagery and the use of colour were also seen as important but subtle influences. Respondents noted that 'unhealthy' products such as pies were often pictured surrounded by vegetables or other 'healthy' accompaniments on the product packaging. Images on packaging were also often felt to play on the idea of a product being home made rather than mass produced. This was seen as an attempt to link the products with consumers' perception that home cooking is often the healthiest option.

It was also noted that supermarkets build their own corporate brand as well as marketing the products on their shelves. These corporate brands themselves attempt to foster associations of quality, freshness and value for money. This was seen as potentially encouraging consumers to associate all a retailers and manufacturers products with these brand values without looking at nutritional labels on the products themselves.

Overall, it was felt that accurate and clear FoP nutrition labelling had the potential to help consumers make informed healthy choices. Furthermore, respondents felt that once consumers fully understood the information presented on FoP nutrition labels they would be better equipped to identify the potentially misleading aspects of product presentation and marketing.

## 4 Adopting a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme

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This chapter explores potential effect that adopting a standardised Front of Pack (FoP) nutrition labelling scheme would have on consumers' food choices and the key elements which should be included in the scheme. Respondents thought that FoP nutrition labelling would be more user friendly if a standardised scheme was adopted by all supermarkets and manufacturers. This was particularly true of consumers who considered that interpreting and trying to compare several different FoP systems was time-consuming and therefore inconvenient to use. There was a perception that introducing a standardised FoP nutrition label would be **easier to understand** and therefore **more convenient** for consumers.

### 4.1 Preferred design of a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme

Respondents were shown a range of examples of FoP nutrition labels, including integrated FoP nutrition labels (including traffic light colours), labels which used monochrome and labels which used pastel colours. Respondents' discussion of these labels, and other examples they were aware of, indicated that it was considered important for FoP nutrition labelling to contain traffic light colours and High, Medium and Low text, in addition to nutritional values, displayed as the amount of nutrients in grams or as % GDA, as these elements were easier for consumers to interpret.

Respondents recognised that consumers who had specific dietary needs or who were trying to lose weight used nutritional values to monitor their intake of certain nutrients. For example, someone who was diabetic may need to check the sugar level in a food product whereas consumers who were on a diet may need to check the calorie and fat content.

However, respondents perceived that the use of nutritional values to make healthier choices required the consumer to calculate the amount of nutrients contained in the food they have chosen and the amount consumed across the day. This was considered inconvenient or difficult to use, especially for those consumers with poor numeracy and literacy skills. Having too much information on the FoP nutrition label, for example expressing the nutritional values in grams and as a percentage of the Guideline Daily Amount, could also be confusing for these consumers.

However, there was a perception among respondents that incorporating interpretive elements, such as the terms high, medium or low, or the traffic light colours, helped consumers to interpret FoP nutrition labelling without using nutritional values.

There were three key reasons why it was considered important to include interpretive elements in a standardised FoP nutrition label. Firstly, it allowed

consumers to make a **quick judgement at a glance**. Traffic light colours provided visual cues, which acted as indicators of 'healthiness'. High, Medium and Low text also helped consumers interpret FoP nutrition labels quickly without studying the nutritional content. These instant indicators were considered effective in encouraging consumers to make choices that were more supportive of a healthy diet.

*"I like the colours because it is immediate, you don't have to think" (Nottingham, Female)*

Secondly, it allowed consumers to **identify 'healthier' foods without referring to nutritional values**. Consumers with low numeracy skills, or those who were not fully informed about nutrition, were less confident using nutritional values. Therefore it was difficult for these consumers to judge whether an item contained high levels of certain nutrients without traffic light colours or high, medium and low text.

Thirdly, the traffic light colour scheme allowed consumers to assess the 'healthiness' of a product based on the **balance of nutrients** (by using the colours) rather than using one nutritional value, for example the number of calories, to make a judgement about the product. When using the traffic light scheme, respondents discussed 'counting the colours', for example choosing an item with three ambers and two reds rather than an item with four reds and one amber. In contrast, where nutritional information was displayed without the traffic light colour scheme, respondents discussed using an individual nutritional value, for example calories or fat, to judge the 'healthiness' of the product. Therefore the traffic light colour scheme allowed consumers to assess how 'healthy' the item was based on several nutrients.

#### 4.1.1 Key elements of a standardised FoP nutritional label

Respondents were shown examples of an integrated FoP nutrition label and asked to discuss their views. Respondents expected that consumers would prefer integrated FoP nutrition labelling as it would contain nutritional information, displayed as both a value (grams per 100g), and a percentage of the GDA. In addition an integrated approach incorporated the traffic light colour scheme and the words high, medium and low which enabled consumers to easily interpret the nutritional information.



*"The extra detail is there if you want it but if you're not bothered and you just want a slight glance, you can see that its high in salt or not" (Bradford, Male)*



**Nutritional Information:** Respondents considered it necessary to incorporate nutritional values into a standardised FoP nutrition label as some consumers monitored particular nutrients depending on their dietary requirements or preferences. For example consumers who wanted to lose weight may check calories.

In order to make a judgement about the healthiness of an item, the key nutritional values which respondents considered necessary were **calories, fat, saturated fat, salt** and **sugar**. Therefore, respondents thought it was important to include all this information in a standardised FoP nutrition label.

**Percentage GDA:** Respondents who were more confident using percentages thought of the percentage as a 'rough' proportion, for example one third or one half. Simplifying the percentages in this way made the figures appear easier to use.

Respondents thought that consumers who were unsure of the recommended daily amount (e.g. 6 grams of salt per day) could still exceed their GDA when using only the amount of nutrients in grams and/or traffic light colour coding. Showing the nutritional information as a percentage of the GDA was felt to help consumers overcome this.

*"You can't just have high, medium and low because half a dozen mediums is actually quite a lot of one. So I think you need the percentages as well" (Glasgow, Female)*

Displaying the nutritional information as a percentage of the GDA would enable consumers to assess whether an item contained a higher proportion of their GDA for a particular nutrient than they would expect for that type of product. For example it may be appropriate to use 30% of your fat as part of an evening meal, however eating 30% of your fat as part of a snack may increase the likelihood of exceeding the GDA for fat.

*"If that's your main meal for the day, well I've only had a third of my fat content for the day." (Nottingham, Male)*

**Traffic Light Colour Coding:** There was a strong preference for the inclusion of traffic light colour coding to enable consumers to quickly interpret information provided within the FoP nutrition label. The traffic light colours were considered to provide visual cues which were easy to spot and interpret. Therefore traffic light colours were more convenient as they allowed consumers to distinguish items with higher or lower levels of certain nutrients whilst scanning the shelves. The inclusion of traffic light colour coding meant that consumers did not necessarily need to read information in order to use FoP nutrition labelling when making food choices. Respondents' discussion of the traffic light colour scheme also indicated that traffic light colour coding was familiar and may be considered intuitive.



*"the red for danger, the orange for ... hmmm it's ok, be careful [...] and the green for just go ahead if you want. Because everyone can understand simple [colours]" (London, Female)*

**High/Medium/Low Text:** The use of high, medium and low was considered helpful for consumers who did not fully understand or were unable to use the traffic light colours, due to, for example, colour blindness.

**Standardised Portion Sizes:** Respondents thought it was important that portion sizes should be standardised in order to help consumers compare products more easily and feel more confident that the information contained in a FoP nutrition label reflected the amount they were expecting to consume. For individual items, such as snacks bars or pre-packaged sandwiches, the nutritional values for the entire product should be displayed per item rather than an arbitrary amount in grams. Portion sizes were considered to be more consumer friendly if they used meaningful units, which were easy to judge without having to measure the item. If portion sizes were expressed in weight or volume respondents thought that this should reflect the amount that most people would typically consume.

## **4.2 Impact of adopting a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label**

It was thought that introducing a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label may have an effect on consumers' food choices for the following 3 reasons.

1. Consumers would find it **easier to notice** the information provided as it would be presented in the same format and position on each item.
2. Consumers may consider a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label to be **more transparent** as respondents perceived that portion sizes and the boundaries between red, orange and green would be decided by the FSA rather than by individual supermarkets and manufacturers.
3. The increased prevalence of the standardised scheme across supermarkets would result in an **increased awareness** among consumers.

### **4.2.1 A standardised integrated FoP nutrition label would be more noticeable**

There was a perception that introducing any standardised FoP nutrition labelling scheme would increase the likelihood that consumers would notice it. As the information would be displayed in the same format on the front of most packaged foods, consumers would expect to see it and therefore would be more likely to notice nutrition labelling. In addition, respondents thought that introducing the integrated FoP nutrition label as a standardised scheme would enhance this further because it used bright traffic light colours and clear text. (It should be noted that respondents thought that it was unnecessary to include FoP nutrition

labelling on some foods including fresh eggs, fruit and vegetables. See section 3.1).

#### 4.2.2 Transparency

As the integrated FoP nutrition label used traffic light colours and high, medium and low text to indicate high (and other) levels of nutrients, respondents thought that consumers would find an integrated FoP nutrition label to be more transparent. Respondents thought that supermarkets and manufacturers chose pastel colours or monochrome schemes to hide the high levels of nutrients in some products. Displaying nutritional information for portion sizes which respondents perceived to be smaller than would typically be consumed could also be misleading, causing the item to appear to contain lower nutrient levels than was the case. Respondents thought that portion sizes should reflect a realistic amount in order to enable consumers to use the information accurately.

Respondents thought that the levels at which red, amber or green colour codes were set should be standardised across the industry and not determined by the manufacturers or supermarket. This type of standardisation would help assure consumers that the levels at which traffic light colours were set would be consistent, regardless of where they bought a particular item.

#### 4.2.3 Raising Awareness

Raising awareness and understanding at the launch of a standardised FoP nutrition label was considered important to encourage consumers to use it. There was a perception that launching a standardised FoP nutrition labelling scheme, which respondents expected would be accompanied by a marketing campaign, would raise awareness about FoP nutrition labelling and healthy eating.

*"If there's a standardised [label] which is going to simplify the system [...] you'd think that that would come with an advertising campaign[...] So that in itself is going to help to raise peoples' awareness of it [...] So it might not necessarily be each individual thing but the advertising that goes with it will help to just educate people" (Glasgow, Female)*

However beyond launching the single scheme, respondents thought that an associated marketing campaign should educate consumers in how to maintain a healthy diet. Respondents discussed simple practical messages, for example eating five a day, which encouraged consumers to make healthier choices by providing practical steps which were easy to apply. These types of messages were considered effective by consumers as they were simple and were reinforced through 'catchy' advertising messages.

### 4.3 Influence of launching a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label on food choices

Respondents were asked about their views concerning the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme and the influence they thought this would have on consumers' behaviour if it was standardised across food products. When discussing the influence of the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme on food choices, respondents tended to focus on the effect that the traffic light colour coding would have on their behaviour at point of choice. For the majority of respondents, the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme would influence food choices by highlighting items that contained high levels of certain nutrients. Respondents tended to consider that items which contained red traffic lights were less healthy and should be eaten in moderation.

Respondents stated that they used traffic lights to balance healthier and less healthy food choices. For example the traffic light system allowed consumers to choose a healthier meal, such as a 'green sandwich', in order to allow an unhealthy 'red snack', such as a chocolate bar.

*I would go for an all green sandwich so I can have a chocolate bar [...] I think that's better than going for a red and a chocolate bar (Female, London)*

There was a perception that traffic light colour coding could discourage consumers from buying items which contained several nutrients which were displayed as red, or encourage them to choose fewer items which displayed red on the label. However respondents thought that consumers sometimes choose food items despite being aware that these items were less healthy. Therefore, respondents considered it was unlikely that FoP nutrition labelling would stop consumers buying these products altogether.

There was a perception that having an integrated FoP nutrition label across products would remind consumers that certain food choices should be eaten in moderation as they may be less healthy, rather than to discourage or 'scare' consumers from ever buying items with 'red' nutrients.

*"I don't think the whole schemes about stopping you buying products but more about educating you that what you're buying may not be the healthiest of a snack or meal, therefore don't eat too much of it" (Glasgow, Male)*

#### 4.3.1 Reducing the influence of other factors on food choices

The primary effect of introducing a standardised integrated FoP nutrition label was thought to be to reduce the number of unhealthy food selections that consumers would make at point of choice. However respondents indicated that

there may be a range of factors, aside from 'healthiness' which would influence consumers' food choices, such as affordability, brand, mood, taste and ethical concerns, for example supporting British agriculture.

As an integrated FoP nutrition label was more convenient and easy to use there was a perception that this may encourage consumers to consider the nutritional information rather than making habitual choices based on factors such as brand or taste or using the design of packaging or marketing by manufactures as an indicator of healthiness.

*"Its more convenient now so you can look at it and see where you think it's alright [...] easier than standing there and comparing it" (London, Female)*

However there was a perception that affordability would be prioritised over health concerns by those consumers for whom cost and value for money were primary concerns.

Respondents thought that consumers may check integrated FoP nutrition labels 'automatically' because, by using traffic light colours on a clear background, they were more noticeable (see section 4.2.1) and could be instantly interpreted by consumers. Respondents thought that repeated exposure to traffic light colours across all outlets could lead to consumers habitually checking these labels when making food choices. Therefore integrated FoP nutrition labels, and in particular the traffic light colour coding would be used as information shortcuts in the same way that many consumers currently check special offers, origin labels and fair-trade symbols (see chapter 2).

#### **4.4 The effect of the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme on different groups**

Respondents perceived that the integrated FoP scheme could be less affective for consumers who had very little interest in making healthier food choices. However respondents thought that the majority of consumers were more aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy diet. Respondents perceived that an integrated FoP nutrition label enabled all consumers to make a choice whether to use the information as the information could be understood and used.

*"At the end of the day you can't make everyone eat healthily but [...] it will give you the choice if you want to then it is there [...] plain, simple, everyone can see" (London, Female)*

There were three types of consumers who were likely to use an integrated FoP nutrition label: Consumers who already habitually checked food labels, for example parents; consumers with specific dietary needs and; those who were trying to loose weight. However, respondents thought that introducing an

integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme would have the greatest influence on consumers who found multiple schemes more confusing and would encourage more use within this group.

*"People who are perhaps confused a bit easier [would] benefit from that, because they're not having to actually drill into three or four different schemes" (Glasgow, male)*

Respondents recognised that some consumers may not want to use nutritional information or continue to believe that they do not need to do so. However, by simplifying food labelling, an integrated FoP scheme would enable all consumers to understand nutritional information and help to ensure that they choose whether to use FoP nutrition labelling rather being discouraged because they were confused.

## 5 How to further the use of the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme?

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This chapter considers what more can be done to encourage use of the integrated Front of Pack (FoP) scheme and examines the potential benefits and disadvantages of the scheme for industry. Respondents perceived that the principle role for consumers in encouraging industry to provide the type of FoP nutrition labelling scheme that they wanted to see was through their shopping habits; frequenting shops that provided the 'positive' aspects of FoP nutrition labelling described in the previous chapter and avoiding those that did not. If manufacturers and supermarkets experienced a reduction in sales, respondents thought that this would be effective in encouraging them to adopt the scheme as standard.

However, respondents thought that as individuals, consumers' would find it difficult to have an impact on industry unless their campaigns gained support of other consumers. Respondents discussed campaigns to boycott products or organisations which were unsuccessful because there did not gain broad enough support. There was a perception that it was difficult to instigate successful consumer campaigns as consumers were influenced more by other factors such as cost and convenience and therefore may not support the campaign even though they agreed with its motives.

Consequently respondents were not confident that consumer power on its own would be sufficient to encourage manufacturers and supermarkets to adopt a single FoP scheme nutrition labelling scheme.

### 5.1 Influential groups

Respondents thought that celebrities could have an important impact on consumers' views and shopping behaviour. Celebrity led campaigns, about healthy eating, such as Jamie's School Dinners, were discussed in all groups and were considered highly effective in attracting media attention and affecting consumer behaviour.

“Nobody's going to even think about [boycotting products], are they, unless Jamie Oliver said to do it” (Nottingham, Female)

There was a perception that larger employers may also have a role in encouraging the food industry to use the integrated FoP nutrition label. There was a view that commitment to the single FOP approach would be beneficial for employers as it would encourage employees to maintain a healthy diet and demonstrate corporate responsibility to clients and competitors.

Respondents thought that individual supermarket chains could put pressure on suppliers who did not use an integrated FoP nutrition label. Respondents also

perceived that supermarkets and manufacturers may be encouraged to use the integrated scheme if their competitors saw an increase in sales as a consequence of introducing it.

*"maybe the two big ones started it, then everybody else might follow suit. [...] they put something out, [publicise that], sales have jumped up by such and such because [...] now they're standardising their food labelling, even if it's just one percent well, [...] everybody know that sales have improved because they're using this type of food labelling, and then the rest might follow suit because sales have improved." (Glasgow, Female)*

Respondents thought a standardised scheme may prompt competition between supermarkets based on the healthiness of the products they produced. In order to remain competitive, it may be necessary for supermarkets and manufacturers to reformulate products to appear healthier to consumers. There was a perception that this competition would initially be instigated by supermarkets who were thought to cater to more affluent consumer. In turn this competition would affect supermarkets which focussed to a greater extent on providing more affordable foods.

*"I could see it being driven by certain brands [...] because of a target consumer is a more affluent and educated person generally [...] they tend to be more information-savvy and so on [...] if it was standardised, this [...] new kind of competitiveness with regards to the health factor and bringing those greens [would be] driven by them and then being pushed down through the industry from that end of the market." (Bradford, Male)*

Respondents perceived that it was the responsibility of the public sector to promote healthy eating. Respondents thought that it was in the interests of the NHS to provide leaflets in GPs' surgeries and hospitals and to advise consumers on healthy eating. Respondents held this view because there was a perception that diet related illnesses were very costly for government and it would be beneficial for the public purse if diet improved. However, respondents could not envisage a role for NHS in influencing industry beyond educating consumers.

It was considered that schools educating children about how the integrated label could be used to make healthy choices could have an impact on parents who may become more aware of an integrated FoP nutrition label through their children. There was a perception that positive behaviour taught to children would then influence their parents' choices. Parents in the groups discussed children's awareness of healthy eating and understanding of the traffic light system.

*"The thing is [children] bring [awareness about food labelling] home and the children would say 'I am not eating that, it has got all red in it' you know, because that is what they pick up. It is the same, a similar thing at the moment, it is not us doing anything about the planet, it seems to be our children that are, you know, they are the ones that go 'don't throw that away' they are getting much more savvy to these sort of thing"*  
(London, Female)

When respondents were asked to consider which group would be most influential in encouraging the use of an integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme, their initial response usually reflected the perception that manufacturers would be resistant to change. Therefore, respondents' first thought was that the only way to ensure that an integrated FoP nutrition label was adopted across industry was for government to force industry to make changes through legislation. However, respondents also expressed concerns about over-legislation of the food industry, which could drive up prices. Therefore respondents thought that bringing together Government, consumers and other organisations such as large employers to encourage supermarkets and manufacturers to adopt a single scheme, may be more achievable.

## **5.2 The role of the FSA in encouraging use of the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme**

Respondents thought that there could be a role for the FSA in educating consumers to enable them to use FoP nutrition labelling to make healthier choices. Respondents referenced a range of channels through which consumers were exposed to information and marketing related to healthy eating and could therefore be used to help educate consumers.

Television and radio were considered to be very effective in delivering information as most consumers were exposed to these channels on a frequent basis. Respondents discussed healthy eating messages, such as eat five a day, which consumers had been exposed to through **TV marketing** campaigns. There was a perception that TV advertising, which used simple messages, was effective as they were 'drummed into' consumers.

*"Even my mum says it to my kids, she comes up once a week, and says have you had your five a day? And I end up telling her lies: yes, yes. Everybody knows it. It's drummed into everybody."* (Glasgow, Female)

However respondents thought that **TV programmes** rather than adverts could also be effective in encouraging consumers to make healthier choices, as these were more interesting, for consumers. For example, a respondent in Nottingham



discussed a documentary which showed that two bread rolls with butter were 'healthier' than a ready meal.

Respondents discussed a number of documentaries, often presented by celebrity chefs, including Jamie Oliver. There was a perception that these **celebrities** were 'knowledgeable' and approached issues concerning food production from the consumers' perspective. In addition, celebrities were considered entertaining and likeable and therefore consumers were more willing to listen to the message.

*"We just do as we're told really [...] by the TV. It sounds really bad when you put it like that but we are a nation of followers"*  
(Nottingham, female)

Respondents discussed using **the internet** to research healthy meals when on a diet. One respondent discussed visiting the Health Scotland website to register to receive a binder of recipes for healthy meals for one. This respondent used the internet to research healthy eating because he had a specific need, he wanted to produce healthy, inexpensive, meals but had little cookery skills. However there was a perception that consumers would be unlikely to use the internet unless they were researching a specific health concern or were trying to lose weight.

*"I've looked online for information before. But I'm on a diet. I'm attending a place to diet so I'm always looking for different ideas and more information, so I don't know if that's the only reason"*  
(Glasgow, Female)

Whilst consumers with specific dietary needs may require more detailed information, for the majority of consumers, messages that were regarded as simple and 'catchy' may be more successful in guiding consumer behaviour. There was a perception that some consumers may not be aware of an integrated FoP nutrition label or understand how the scheme may be used to identify healthier foods. Therefore there may be a role for the FSA in educating consumers about it and how it would help consumers make healthier choices more easily.

*"Unless it's been made public... (unclear) public information out on the telly and let everybody know [...] how unhealthy this is and what a good idea [integrated FoP nutrition label] is, then you might get somebody turning around and saying yes, it's a good idea, that. Let's do this. But if everybody is just like in the dark like we were until we came and saw this sort of thing."*  
(Nottingham, Male)

### **5.3 Advantages and disadvantages for industry in adopting the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme**

Respondents thought that there were two key advantages for supermarkets and manufacturers in adopting a single scheme. Firstly, adopting an integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme would help to promote a more trusting relationship between consumers and the food industry. Secondly it would 'create a level playing field' by enabling consumers to make fair comparisons with competitor's brands.

Therefore there was a perception that adopting an integrated FoP nutrition label would be viewed as more transparent to consumers and would help promote trust. Many felt that some current schemes did little to highlight products were potentially unhealthy. .

The principle benefit for industry in adopting an integrated FoP nutrition label as a standardised system across manufacturers and supermarkets would be to ensure that no one manufacturer or supermarket would be able to disguise high nutrient levels in their food products.

The primary disadvantages of adopting an integrated FoP nutrition label for industry would be the cost associated with implementing the scheme and the potential that certain unhealthy products would be more difficult to sell. Respondents thought that there may be significant one-off costs involved in redesigning packaging however once packaging had been redesigned there would be no further costs involved. There would also be scope to introduce labelling gradually on food packaging when supermarkets introduced new products and redesigned old ones.

There was a perception that having launched an integrated FoP nutrition label, it may be more difficult to sell certain foods, particularly processed foods or foods with lots of nutrients marked red. There was a perception that this would have a greater effect on manufacturers who primarily produced items with high levels of fat, salt and sugar. However respondents thought that these items would not be excluded from consumers' diet and there was a perception that there may be scope for manufacturers and supermarkets to reformulate products to reduce nutrient levels. Respondents thought that sales of fresh foods may improve which would also counteract this.

Overall, the benefits for the consumer of introducing an integrated FoP scheme were thought to outweigh any disadvantages for industry. Respondents thought that promoting consumers' health and helping consumers to make healthier choices were more important than the risk associated with profits while the market and people's purchasing habits readjusted to the provision of this new information.

However, respondents were concerned that manufacturers may pass on associated costs of launching the scheme onto the consumer. There was also a perception that manufacturers may increase the cost of items which have green traffic light colours as these products would be more desirable to consumers.

*"All the reds and all these yellows and all these greens and what have you. I think what the manufacturers would do is [...] put up the prices of green ones because everyone is buying them"*  
(Nottingham, Male)

There was concern that for consumers for whom cost and affordability were primary concerns, increasing the proportion of foods which were perceived as 'healthier' may further reduce the availability of food which these consumers consider affordable.

## 6 Conclusions

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One of the principal roles for the citizens forums is to enable the Agency to 'put the consumer first' in delivering its strategic objectives and developing policy. This wave of forums has provided a means to understand consumers' relationship with food labels, their awareness and understanding of Front of Pack (FoP) labelling and the effects a standardised FoP scheme would have on them and on the food industry.

### 6.1 Food labels - Awareness and Utilisation

Respondents were aware of a range of different type of food labels which could be categorised as falling into one of five categories: nutritional values; dietary advice; instructional information; informational short cuts and; marketing. Respondents used these different types of labels in order to make informed decisions about what to buy and how to store and cook it.

Respondents felt that labelling was important because they had a right to know what went into their food in order that they could make informed decisions about exactly what they were consuming. This was particularly important when deciding whether to buy a new product.

While labelling was regarded as key for all consumers, respondents thought that it was particularly important for those with specific dietary requirements or allergies. Additionally, respondents thought that the information was important for parents who needed to ensure that their children were eating healthily.

There were two types of occasion where labels were typically used by consumers; at the point of choice or at home immediately before consumption<sup>1</sup>. Respondents thought that consumers were unlikely to be carefully planning their diet in 'eating on the go' situations, such as purchasing lunch during a work time break or a light snack whilst out shopping, as they would be in a hurry. As a consequence, they would be looking for informational short cuts which would enable them to make informed decisions about food products quickly and easily.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous research conducted by BMRB Social Research examined observed behaviour, rather than respondents' self reported use of FoP nutrition labels. This research found that individuals tended to make most use of the labels at point of choice, in the home respondents occasionally noted FoP labels but rarely used the nutritional information to plan meals or make decisions. See: Malam, S, Clegg, S et al. (May 2009) *Comprehension and use of UK nutrition signpost labelling schemes*. BMRB Social Research prepared for the FSA.

When doing the weekly shop, respondents thought consumers tended to make limited use of labels, as most of the items they were purchasing was the same each week and was already well understood. The only time that consumers did tend to make extensive use of labels was when they were purchasing new, unknown products.

At home, cooking and storage instructions on labels were regarded as very important in ensuring food was safe to eat as were sell-by, use-by and best before dates.

## **6.2 FoP nutrition labelling - awareness and utilisation**

While overall awareness of FoP labelling was high, there was some variation in knowledge of the different schemes in use in the market. The highest awareness of multiple schemes was among those who regularly used different supermarkets. Fewer respondents said they had used FoP than were aware of it although some respondents made regular use of the labels.

Respondents viewed FoP nutrition labelling as important, as they felt consumers have a right to know the nutritional values of the products they are buying and the implications for their health. Respondents emphasised convenience and speed whilst food shopping, as such FoP nutrition labels were viewed as useful to support consumers in quickly making informed decisions about nutrition.

Provision of FoP nutrition labelling was seen as particularly important on processed and convenience foods such as ready meals. This was due to consumers' increasing reliance on convenience foods and the wide variation in nutritional values between these products.

## **6.3 The effectiveness of FoP nutrition labelling**

Certain aspects of FoP nutrition labelling were seen as confusing or inconvenient by respondents and this reduced their effectiveness. The existence of a variety of different FoP nutrition labelling schemes was felt to make comparisons between products from different retailers and manufacturers more complicated. Furthermore, multiple schemes caused some confusion among respondents about how much influence retailers and manufacturers had over the content of labelling and the effect this has on its accuracy. Some respondents assumed that the retailers and manufacturers themselves were responsible for setting the level of guideline daily amounts (GDA) and defining the boundaries between red, orange and green traffic light bands.

Aspects of FoP nutrition labelling that involved numerical information were seen as off-putting by those with low confidence in their numerical abilities. This was often based in the assumption that use of FoP nutrition labels would involve

calculations and manipulation of numerical information, something these consumers would find difficult.

In terms of trust, some respondents felt a level of distrust towards big business and marketing practices. Overall, respondents felt that they had to take FoP information at face value and put their trust that the government would ensure the accuracy and clarity of the information provided on FoP nutrition labels.

#### **6.4 Adopting the integrated FoP nutrition labelling scheme**

Respondents felt introducing a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme would make FoP nutrition labelling more user friendly as it would be **easier and more convenient** to make comparisons between the products of different manufacturers and supermarkets. Additionally, consumers would be **more aware of FoP nutrition labelling** as a result of the advertising surrounding the launch of any scheme. Finally, consumers would perceive food labelling as more **transparent** as supermarkets and manufactures would use a scheme which highlighted high nutrient levels.

The key elements which consumers considered were important to include in a single FoP nutrition labelling scheme were **nutritional values; nutritional values as a percentage of the GDA; traffic light colour coding; high, medium and low text and; standardised portion sizes.**

Displaying the amount of nutrient (in grams per 100 grams) was considered necessary for consumers who needed to monitor their intake of nutrients, either because they had specific dietary needs or because they were trying to lose weight. Presenting nutritional values as a percentage of the GDA was considered important to help people to consume no more than their recommended daily amount of nutrients, however this was only suitable for consumers who were confident using figures presented as percentages. The traffic light colour and high, medium and low text element, were considered quick and convenient to use and easier to understand than numbers and percentages.

Respondents felt introducing an integrated FoP nutrition label would encourage consumers to make healthier choices by making it easier for them to identify items which contained higher nutrient levels and should therefore be eaten in moderation. Introducing an integrated FoP nutrition label would be most likely to effect behaviour of consumers who felt that interpreting multiple schemes was confusing and inconvenient. However an integrated scheme may have little impact on consumers who did not want to check food labelling or felt that they did not need to use food labelling because they already had a healthy diet.

## **6.5 Encouraging use of an integrated FoP scheme**

Consumers believed that they could have an influence on industry. However they felt that consumer power in isolation may not be sufficient to encourage industry to adopt an integrated scheme. Any consumer campaign would need support from a range of established organisations with a role for consumer health education. Celebrity endorsement was suggested as a means for encouraging consumer support.

Respondents felt the principle benefit for industry in adopting an integrated FoP nutrition label would be in establishing a 'level playing field' for all manufacturers. The key disadvantage would be the effect that including traffic light colour coding may have on purchases. Respondents thought that displaying the traffic light colour coding may result in consumers buying fewer items which contained high fat, salt and sugar levels. However, it was felt this could be an incentive to reformulate products and reduce high fat, salt and sugar levels. This was also considered to be beneficial to consumers. The benefits of launching an integrated FoP nutrition label, in encouraging consumers to make healthier choices, were considered to outweigh any disadvantages for industry.

## Appendices

- 1 Recruitment and Methodology
- 2 Topic guides
- 3 Stimulus material



## Appendix 1: Recruitment & Methodology

The recruitment was managed by our internal field team, recruiters used 'free find' methods for each of the areas involved in the study. The field managers were fully briefed on the project and provided with detailed recruitment instructions and a screening questionnaire in order for recruiters to assess respondents' eligibility to participate in the research.

All recruiters are members of the IQCS (Interviewers Quality Control Scheme). Recruiters used 'free find' techniques, members of the public were approached face to face and asked to undertake a screening questionnaire to assess eligibility and ensure that designated quotas were accurately filled.

In total 40 respondents took part in the research. Quotas were set for gender, age and social grade in order to ensure that the research covered.

**Table 1. Recruitment quotas achieved for this research:**

Area	Gender		Age			Social grade		Ethnicity
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Non-White
London	4	6	3	5	2	6	4	At Least 3
Bradford	4	6	2	6	2	4	6	At Least 3
Nottingham	4	6	2	5	3	6	4	At Least 2
Glasgow	4	6	3	4	3	4	6	At Least 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>At Least 10</b>

Once recruited, the participants were sent a confirmation letter and received a reminder phone call in the week leading up to each of the two workshops. The field team also made recruitment checks prior to the workshops to ensure that the quotas set in the relevant recruitment profile had been filled. Participants received incentive payments of £40 at the first workshop and £45 at the second workshop.

**Table 2. Workshop Timetable (All dates 2009)**

Area	Workshop 1	Workshop 2
London	22 <sup>nd</sup> September	20 <sup>th</sup> October
Bradford	14 <sup>th</sup> October	27 <sup>th</sup> October
Nottingham	30 <sup>th</sup> September	12 <sup>th</sup> October
Glasgow	05 <sup>th</sup> October	19 <sup>th</sup> October

Group discussions were carried out by experienced qualitative researchers trained in the techniques of non-directive interviewing. Each group was digitally recorded and then professionally transcribed in preparation for analysis.

Material used in the analysis of qualitative methods is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro-form (for example, accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc.). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Qualitative analysis is essentially about detection and exploration of the data, making sense of the data by looking for themes and structure contained within it. TNS-BMRB uses a method called **Matrix Mapping** which works from verbatim transcripts and involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. The process begins with a **familiarisation stage** and would include a researcher's review of the audio tapes and/or transcripts. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers' experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data, a **thematic framework is constructed**. The analysis then proceeds by **summarising and synthesising the data** according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. When all the data have been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to **map the data and identify features within the data**: defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations, and providing explanations.

The mapping process is similar for both individual interviews and group discussions. The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing

together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but it involves a process of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.

## Appendix 2: Topic Guides

## Topic Guide - Workshop 1

	Notes	Approx timing
<b>1. Introduction and background</b>		<b>10 mins</b>
<b>1.1 Scene-setting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About BMRB – independent research agency</li> <li>Introduce research – ongoing dialogue with public on food, food standards and health;</li> <li>Commissioned by Food Standards Agency</li> <li>Confidentiality – their views will be used, but not identifiable</li> <li>Recording group – recordings only available to the research team</li> <li>Length of discussion approx. 1.5 hours</li> </ul>	<p>WELCOME: Orientates interviewee, gets them prepared to take part in the interview</p> <p>Outlines the 'rules' of the group (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines)</p>	<b>5 mins</b>
<b>1.2 FSA Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome and introduction to FSA / staff / observers</li> </ul>		<b>5 mins</b>
<b>1.3 Group introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants introduce themselves to the group. Ask participants to give their first name and what they are planning on having to eat for dinner.</li> </ul>	<p>INTRODUCTION: provides contextual background information about the interviewee and helps respondent become more at ease with discussing issues with moderator and group. Discuss briefly</p>	
<b>2. Labels on food packaging</b>		<b>15 mins</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sorts of labels do you look for / see on food packaging when you are out shopping? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: Position of information, it's size, ease of locating the information on the packet</li> <li>○ Get participants to think about different types of occasions that they shop for food (e.g. weekly shop, quick snack, work lunch, top-up) do they look for different types of info on different occasions?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What do you use these for / why do you look at labels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: Health, any special dietary requirements (if not spontaneously mentioned)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• When do you look at these labels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whilst making the purchase / in the shop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PROBE: Why do you look at the label then? How does it help you make a decision?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ After purchasing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PROBE: Why do you look at the label then? How does it help you make a decision</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there instances when the labelling on a food product is more important for you / other people than would otherwise</li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: make sure in this first section that you keep the participants focused on all labels and don't just talk about FoP Nutrition labels.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Note down any issues where participants mention areas of labelling that they find confusing or unclear or helpful and easy to use for discussion later in this session. Refer to these in last session.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Do consumers just look for this information at the point of purchase or do they use it when they get their food home?</p>	<p><b>10 mins</b></p> <p><b>5 mins</b></p>
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<p>be the case?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When / for whom</li> <li>○ PROBE: Different shopping occasions</li> <li>○ PROBE: Different food products</li> <li>○ PROBE: People with special dietary requirements, eating healthily (on a diet) or when buying for children</li> <li>• SUMMING UP: How important is the information provided by manufacturers on food labels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To them personally</li> <li>○ To other people they may know</li> <li>○ Other groups of people</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>3. Front of Pack (FoP) Nutrition Labelling</b>		<b>25 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUGGESTED DIALOGUE: Over the rest of this session and the next time we meet we want to explore your opinions on FoP nutrition labelling. The government wants consumers to have the information they need so they can make healthier food choices which in turn will help to tackle the increase in overweight people, obesity and diet-related illnesses in the UK.</li> <li>• Do you think it is important for manufacturers to provide FoP nutrition labelling on food? Why do you say this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: For which types of food</li> <li>○ PROBE: For them personally, for other people they may or may</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>STIMULUS 1: Show FoP example sheet</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: In the interest of negotiating bias please state that participants may well disagree with the government's opinion.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Make sure you get participants to</p>	<b>10 Mins</b>

<p>not know, For other groups of people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sorts of information do you think it is important to show on a front of pack nutrition label? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Take spontaneous then PROBE: Calories, Salt, Sugar, Fat / Saturated fat, percentage of GDA, High/Med/Low text, Traffic light colours, amount of nutrients in a portion of the product</li> <li>○ Is this the same for all foods? Why / why not? Which foods are different?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you feel that it is necessary to have FoP nutritional information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why do you say this</li> <li>○ Is this the same for all foods? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Which foods are different?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you trust the FoP information provided on packaging? Why / Why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: Are consumers worried about the transparency of manufacturers' marketing techniques</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SUGGESTED DIALOGUE: FoP nutritional is available on a lot of food products. Do you think there is a legal requirement on manufacturers and retailers and manufacturers to provide this information or do they do it voluntarily?</li> </ul>	<p>think about different groups of people and not just themselves. Different age groups, dietary requirements etc.</p> <p><b>15 mins</b></p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE:</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Should it be a legal requirement?</li> <li>○ Do you have a different opinion depending on the type of food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is it about these products that makes you feel differently?</li> <li>▪ Does it need to be on 'healthy' foods as well? Why / why not?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Probe around different types of healthy and unhealthy foods. i.e. Is it the same for an apple as it is for a pork pie?</p>	
<b>4. Nutrition Labelling</b>		<b>35 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before this session, was there anyone who had not noticed FoP nutrition labelling?</li> <li>• Were people aware of all the different types of FoP labelling that was available in the shops? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: If not are people surprised?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• FOR THOSE WHO WERE AWARE: Do you use FoP nutrition information or have you ever used it in the past? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When – At the shop / at home</li> <li>○ How used – colours, calories, fat salt etc,</li> <li>○ Why did you use it? What need were you trying to satisfy?</li> <li>○ Do they find it confusing in any way? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If so why is it confusing?</li> <li>▪ Take spontaneous then PROBE: Presence or absence of - Percentages, Nutritional values, colour</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Could use stimulus 1 if you feel it is necessary</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Get participants to think about occasions where they are shopping for other people as well as themselves.</p>	<b>15 mins</b>





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBE: consistency of design / different types of FoP</li> <li>• GROUP EXERCISE: Show pairs of labels on A3 sheets (STIMULUS 2, 3, 4 and 5) and get participants to decide which they think is the healthier choice. Select one person at random but get the whole group to chip in and 'help' out with the reasoning.</li> <li>• Get participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Think aloud</li> <li>○ Describe what they are looking at</li> <li>○ What information they are using and in what way</li> <li>○ Anything that's making it easy / difficult to understand</li> <li>○ Any other reasons (e.g. preconceptions)</li> <li>○ SUM UP: What led you to your conclusion?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Expecting that we'll have enough time to do a maximum of three of these exercises.</p> <p>STIMULUS 2, 3, 4, 5: Please use one pair of labels at a time.</p> <p>(It might be difficult to be factual on what is the healthiest product so asking for information &amp; feedback on what they have seen and the impact it has had might be an approach.)</p>	
<b>5. Any other issues</b>		<b>5 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What three top line messages would they want to give to government / FSA in regards to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General labelling</li> <li>○ FoP nutrition labelling?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Anything else participants would like to raise or discuss</li> <li>• Reminder re next event – topic, dates, location (TBC)</li> <li>• Activities between sessions? Examples of</li> </ul>		

<p>FoP nutrition labelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does it provide the information they require?</li> <li>○ Is it clear and easy to understand?</li> <li>○ Please bring good / bad examples</li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE:</p> <p>Completion of this task should not be presented as a pre-requisite for attending the next workshop.</p>	
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## THANK AND CLOSE

*[Evaluation handouts and incentives]*

## Topic Guide - Workshop 2

	Notes	Approx timing
<b>Introduction and background</b>		<b>10 mins</b>
<p><b>1.1 Scene-setting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About BMRB – independent research agency</li> <li>• Introduce research – ongoing dialogue with public on food, food standards and health;</li> <li>• Commissioned by Food Standards Agency</li> <li>• Confidentiality – their views will be used, but not identifiable</li> <li>• Recording group – recordings only available to the research team</li> <li>• Length of discussion approx. 1.5 hours</li> </ul> <p><b>1.2 FSA Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and introduction to FSA / staff / observers</li> </ul>	<p>WELCOME: Orientates interviewee, gets them prepared to take part in the interview</p> <p>Outlines the 'rules' of the group (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines)</p>	<p><b>5 mins</b></p> <p><b>5 mins</b></p>

<p><b>1.3 Group introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants introduce themselves to the group. Ask participants to give their first name and what they are planning on having to eat for dinner.</li> </ul>	<p>INTRODUCTION: provides contextual background information about the interviewee and helps respondent become more at ease with discussing issues with moderator and group. Discuss briefly</p>	
<p><b>2. Labels on food packaging</b></p>		<p><b>15 mins</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What sorts of labels do you look for / see on food packaging when you are out shopping? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROBE: Position of information, it's size, ease of locating the information on the packet</li> <li>Get participants to think about different types of occasions that they shop for food (e.g. Weekly shop, quick snack, work lunch, top-up) do they look for different types of info on different occasions?</li> </ul> </li> <li>What do you use these for / why do you look at labels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROBE: Health, any special dietary requirements (if not spontaneously mentioned)</li> </ul> </li> <li>When do you look at these labels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst making the purchase / in the shop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROBE: Why do you look at the label then? How does it help you make a decision?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: make sure in this first section that you keep the participants focused on all labels and don't just talk about FoP Nutrition labels.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Note down any issues where participants mention areas of labelling that they find confusing or unclear or helpful and easy to use for discussion later in this session. Refer to these in last session.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Do consumers just look for this information at the point of purchase or do they use it when they get their food home?</p>	<p><b>10 mins</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ After purchasing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PROBE: Why do you look at the label then? How does it help you make a decision</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there instances when the labelling on a food product is more important for you / other people than would otherwise be the case? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When / for whom</li> <li>○ PROBE: Different shopping occasions</li> <li>○ PROBE: Different food products</li> <li>○ PROBE: People with special dietary requirements, eating healthily (on a diet) or when buying for children</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SUMMING UP: How important is the information provided by manufacturers on food labels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To them personally</li> <li>○ To other people they may know</li> <li>○ Other groups of people</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<b>5 mins</b>
<b>3. Front of Pack (FoP) Nutrition Labelling</b>		<b>25 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUGGESTED DIALOGUE: Over the rest of this session and the next time we meet we want to explore your opinions on FoP nutrition labelling. The government wants consumers to have the information they need so they can make healthier food choices which in turn will help to tackle the increase in overweight people, obesity and diet-</li> </ul>	<p>STIMULUS 1: Show FoP example sheet</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: In the interest of negotiating bias please state that participants may well disagree with the government's opinion.</p>	<b>10 Mins</b>

<p>related illnesses in the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think it is important for manufacturers to provide FoP nutrition labelling on food? Why do you say this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: For which types of food</li> <li>○ PROBE: For them personally, for other people they may or may not know, for other groups of people?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What sorts of information do you think it is important to show on a front of pack nutrition label? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Take spontaneous then PROBE: Calories, Salt, Sugar, Fat / Saturated fat, percentage of GDA, High/Med/Low text, Traffic light colours, amount of nutrients in a portion of the product</li> <li>○ Is this the same for all foods? Why / why not? Which foods are different?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you feel that it is necessary to have FoP nutritional information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why do you say this</li> <li>○ Is this the same for all foods? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Which foods are different?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you trust the FoP information provided on packaging? Why / Why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: Are consumers worried about the transparency of manufacturers' marketing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Make sure you get participants to think about different groups of people and not just themselves. Different age groups, dietary requirements etc.</p>	<p><b>15 mins</b></p>
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<p>techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUGGESTED DIALOGUE: FoP nutritional is available on a lot of food products. Do you think there is a legal requirement on manufacturers and retailers and manufacturers to provide this information or do they do it voluntarily? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Should it be a legal requirement?</li> <li>○ Do you have a different opinion depending on the type of food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is it about these products that makes you feel differently?</li> <li>▪ Does it need to be on 'healthy' foods as well? Why / why not?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Probe around different types of healthy and unhealthy foods. i.e. Is it the same for an apple as it is for a pork pie?</p>	
<p><b>4. Experience of FoP Nutrition Labelling</b></p>		<p><b>35 mins</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before this session, was there anyone who had not noticed FoP nutrition labelling?</li> <li>• Were people aware of all the different types of FoP labelling that was available in the shops? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PROBE: If not are people surprised?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• FOR THOSE WHO WERE AWARE: Do you use FoP nutrition information or have you ever used it in the past? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When – At the shop / at home</li> <li>○ How used – colours, calories, fat salt etc,</li> <li>○ Why did you use it? What need</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Could use stimulus 1 if you feel it is necessary</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Get participants to think about occasions where they are shopping for other people as well as themselves.</p>	<p><b>15 mins</b></p>





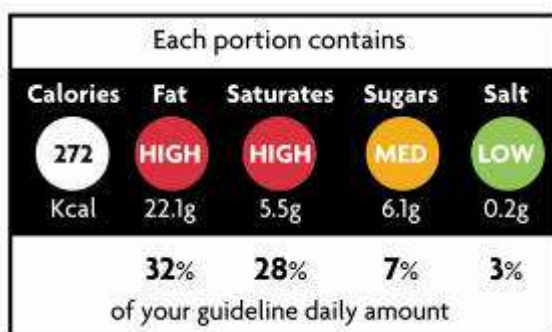
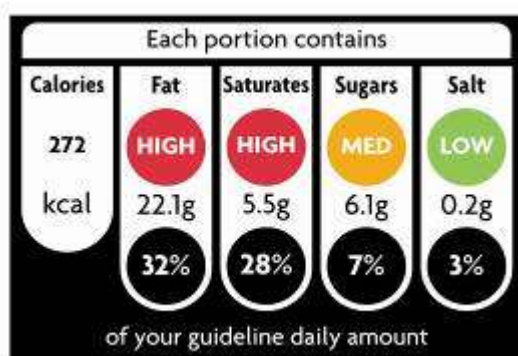
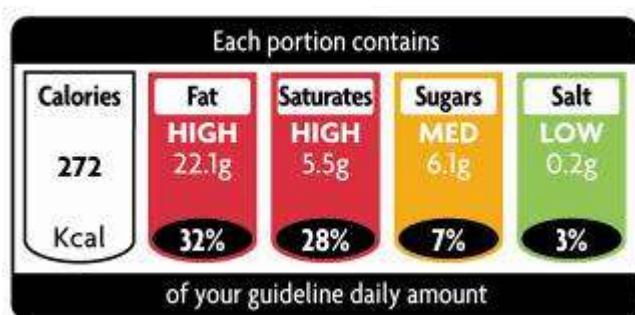
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How does it influence people? What are the key influencing factors?</li> <li>○ For different groups of people / you <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What could be done to help encourage you to use it / use it more <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBE: consistency of design / different types of FoP</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• GROUP EXERCISE: Show pairs of labels on A3 sheets (STIMULUS 2, 3, 4 and 5) and get participants to decide which they think is the healthier choice. Select one person at random but get the whole group to chip in and 'help' out with the reasoning.</li> <li>• Get participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Think aloud</li> <li>○ Describe what they are looking at</li> <li>○ What information they are using and in what way</li> <li>○ Anything that's making it easy / difficult to understand</li> <li>○ Any other reasons (e.g. preconceptions)</li> <li>○ SUM UP: What led you to your conclusion?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Expecting that we'll have enough time to do a maximum of three of these exercises.</p> <p>STIMULUS 2, 3, 4, 5: Please use one pair of labels at a time.</p> <p>(It might be difficult to be factual on what is the healthiest product so asking for information &amp; feedback on what they have seen and the impact it has had might be an approach.)</p>	<p><b>12 mins</b></p>
<p><b>5. Any other issues</b></p>		<p><b>5 mins</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What three top line messages would they want to give to government / FSA in</li> </ul>		

<p>regards to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General labelling</li> <li>○ FoP nutrition labelling?</li> <li>• Anything else participants would like to raise or discuss</li> <li>• Reminder re next event – topic, dates, location (TBC)</li> <li>• Activities between sessions? Examples of FoP nutrition labelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does it provide the information they require?</li> <li>○ Is it clear and easy to understand?</li> <li>○ Please bring good / bad examples</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Completion of this task should not be presented as a pre-requisite for attending the next workshop.</p>	
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## **THANK AND CLOSE**

***[Evaluation handouts and incentives***

### Appendix 3: Stimulus Materials – examples of FoP labels





Each 30g serving contains

Calories	Sugars	Fat	Saturates	Salt
116	10g	0.9g	0.5g	0.3g
6%	11%	1%	2%	6%

of an adult's guideline daily amount



30g serving with 125ml semi-skimmed milk contains

Calories	Sugar	Fat	Saturates	Salt
175	17.1g	2.9g	1.9g	0.4g
9%	19%	4%	10%	7%

of your guideline daily amount



PER 50G SERVING WITH 125ML SEMI SKIMMED MILK PROVIDES

CALS	SUGAR	FAT	SAT FAT	SALT
260	21.1g	8.5g	2.7g	0.15g
13%	23%	12%	13%	3%

OF YOUR GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNT





**Vegetarian**

**Each slice contains**

**Calories**

**110**

**6%**

**Sugar**

**12.7g**

**14%**

**Fat**

**2.9g**

**4%**

**Saturates**

**1.2g**

**6%**

**Salt**

**0.2g**

**3%**

**of your guideline daily amount**



Each slice (29g) contains				
Calories	Sugars	Fat	Saturates	Salt
120	14.0g	4.8g	2.2g	0.15g
6%	16%	7%	11%	3%
of an adult's guideline daily amount				



















Nutrition Information

Typical values	per 100g	per 75g pot	% RDA
Energy	270kJ	203kJ	4%
Protein	1.5g	1.1g	2%
Carbohydrate	6.3g	4.7g	10%
of which sugars	4.8g	3.6g	10%
Fat	3.7g	2.8g	7%
of which saturates	0.5g	0.4g	10%
Salt	1.1g	0.8g	16%



#### Nutrition

Typical values	100g	Half of a pot (75g)
Energy	270kJ	203kJ
Protein	1.5g	1.1g
Carbohydrate	6.3g	4.7g
of which sugars	4.8g	3.6g
Fat	3.7g	2.8g
of which saturates	0.5g	0.4g
Salt	1.1g	0.8g



NUTRITION

Typical values	per 100g
Energy kJ	270
Protein	1.5g
Carbohydrate	6.3g
of which sugars	4.8g
Fat	3.7g
of which saturates	0.5g
Salt	1.1g
Equivalent to salt	0.78g

