



THE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES INDUSTRY SERIES



OECD-COLEACP Fruits and Vegetables Industry Series

Session 2 - Policies for encouraging healthier food choices: opportunities for the fruit and vegetable sector

29 March 2022 – 10:00-11:30 CET

[Online \(Zoom\)](#)

1. Background

Food systems around the world face a triple challenge: providing food security and nutrition for a growing global population; supporting livelihoods for those working along the food supply chain; and contributing to environmental sustainability.¹ Increased production of processed foods, rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles have led to a shift in dietary patterns. People are now consuming more foods high in energy, fats, free sugars² and salt/sodium, and many people do not eat enough fruit, vegetables and other dietary fibre such as whole grains.³ Current dietary trends, combined with a world population that is projected to reach 10 billion people by around 2050, will exacerbate risks to both people and the planet.

In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults aged 18 years and older were overweight. Of these over 650 million adults were obese. 39% of adults aged 18 years and over (39% of men and 40% of women) were overweight. Overall, about 13% of the world's adult population (11% of men and 15% of women) were obese in 2016. The worldwide prevalence of obesity nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016.⁴ In 2019, an estimated 38.2 million children under the age of 5 years were overweight or obese. Once considered a high-income country problem, overweight and obesity are now on the rise in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings. The fundamental cause of obesity and overweight is an energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended. Many low- and middle-income countries are now facing a "double burden" of malnutrition. Overweight and obesity, as well as their related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), are largely preventable.

Dietary guidelines at both the national and the global levels recommend consuming a variety of foods, including fruit and vegetables (F&V), legumes, and animal-source foods (meat, eggs, dairy, fish), while limiting the intake of sugar, fat and salt. Shifting global diets away from current consumption patterns to be more in line with these

¹ OECD (2021), Making Better Policies for Food Systems, OECD Publishing, Paris.

² Free sugars are all sugars added to foods or drinks by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, as well as sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates.

³ [WHO](#). The WHO guidelines define their recommendations for free sugar and fat intake as a share of an appropriate total caloric intake. The WHO guidelines do not provide precise numerical targets for what constitutes an appropriate total caloric intake but suggest that caloric intake should be in balance with energy expenditure, which differs by person depending on gender, age and level of physical activity, among other factors.

⁴ WHO. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>



guidelines could have important implications for the triple challenge facing food systems.⁵ Consuming a healthy diet throughout the life-course helps to prevent malnutrition in all its forms as well as a range of NCDs and conditions. Aligning diets with World Health Organisation guidelines on sugar and fat consumption would have the expected positive effect on nutrition and food security and would also positively affect environmental sustainability.⁶

2. Nutrition labelling systems

Consumers are increasingly interested in knowing more about their food. Nutrition labelling systems are aimed at guiding consumers on healthier options, encouraging better eating habits and improving diets that are poor due to inadequate intake of some food categories.

Nutrition labelling is the provision of information about the nutritional content of individual food products. It is most commonly applied to prepackaged food and beverage products but comes in a variety of formats. Supermarkets and food manufacturers now highlight the energy, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content on the front of the packaging, alongside the reference intake for each of these.

Variables include: the type and number of nutrients labelled, the reference values used, whether the information appears on front-of-pack (FOP) or back-of-pack (BOP) and whether the label gives any interpretative guidance to the consumer.⁷ Nutritional information panels (NIPs) are a part of the food label. These tell you what nutrients the food contains and in which quantity.

Food labels are included on all food products, except for very small packets and fresh foods like fruit, vegetables and local bakery or organic products. Fresh fruit and vegetables are generally considered raw agricultural commodities and exempt from typical nutrition labelling requirements. If the food has not been processed to any degree, then they do not require a nutrition label. However, if the food has gone through any processing whatsoever it is required to have a nutrition label of some sort.

Food labels tell what ingredients and/or additives are in the food and the nutritional information about the food and food storage instructions and who manufactured the food.

The **ingredients** in the food, including additives, are listed in descending order of weight at the time they were used to make the food. If flavourings are used, the label must say so. The ingredients list must also highlight any allergens (foods that some people are allergic to) where used as ingredients. There will usually also be a food business operator's or importer's name and address, a date mark, instructions for safe storage and preparation, nutrition information and weight.

When nutrition information is given on food packaging label, as a minimum it must show the amount of each of the following per 100g or 100ml of the food or drink: **energy** (in kJ and kcal), **fat** (in g), **saturates** (saturated fat in g), **carbohydrate**⁸ (in g), **sugars** (in g) (sugars occur naturally in foods such as fruit and milk, but we don't need to cut down on these types of sugars), **protein** (in g), **salt** (in g), plus the amount of any nutrient for which a nutrition or health claim has been made.

FOP nutrition labelling is simplified nutrition information provided on the front of food packaging aiming to help consumers with their food choices. Under the current European Union (EU) rules, the indication of nutrition information on the FOP is not mandatory but could be provided on a voluntary basis.⁹

⁵ OECD. Grégoire Tallard, Marcel Adenäuer, Koen Deconinck, and Gaëlle Gouarin. [Potential Impact of Dietary Changes on the Triple Challenge Facing Food Systems: Three Stylised Scenarios](#). 2022.

⁶ Tallard, G., et al. (2022), ["Potential impact of dietary changes on the triple challenge facing food systems: Three stylised scenarios"](#), OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No. 173, OECD Publishing, Paris,

⁷ EUFIC (2017), [Global Update on Nutrition Labelling](#)

⁸ There are 2 types of carbohydrates that the body turns into energy: starchy carbohydrates and sugars. Sugars are often listed on nutrition labels as "carbohydrates (of which sugars)". This includes added sugars and naturally occurring sugars found in fruit and milk. Starchy carbohydrates are found in starchy foods, like potatoes, bread, rice, and pasta. We should get most of our energy from starchy foods, rather than food or drinks containing added sugars.

⁹ European Commission. [Food Labelling](#).



Healthy eating logos (e.g. Keyhole or healthy choice logo) distinguish between basic and non-basic food groups (from dietary recommendations). Examples¹⁰ of these include the Swedish green keyhole, heart symbol of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa, Smart Choices logo (developed in the USA, but currently not in use) and the Choice logos from the Netherlands.

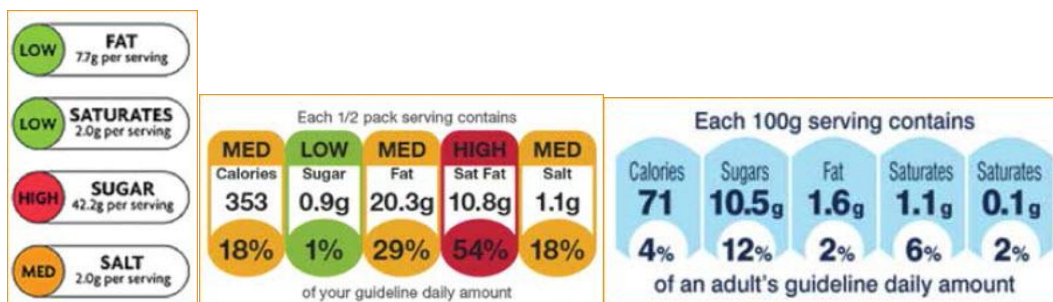
The **traffic light labelling system**: Some FOP nutrition labels use red, amber and green colour coding. Colour-coded nutritional information tells you at a glance if the food has high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt: **red means high; amber means medium and green means low**. But any red on the label means the food is high in fat, saturated fat, salt or sugars, and these are the foods we should cut down on.

Nutri-Score: It takes into account the overall nutritional contribution of a product by weighting the prevalence of the different nutrients and makes the distinction between the different types (e.g. it only takes into account saturated fats among the fats). It also gives positive points to other aspects when weighting the prevalence of the different nutrients: e.g. presence of vegetables, pulses and nuts, fibres and proteins.

Some countries have chosen to move away from using health symbols on pack and provide nutrition information via a **smartphone app**.



Swedish Green keyhole Heart symbol Smart Choices Choice logos from the Netherlands



Traffic light label A hybrid of traffic lights with % GDA Guideline daily amount label



Nutri-Score

The complexity of the exercise lies in the consumers' understanding of these different systems.¹¹ The development of FOP systems should be science-based and meaningful for all consumers. Nutrition labelling is increasingly moving beyond packaged goods, particularly in North & South America and Asia. Menu labelling in restaurant chains with over 20 locations is now mandatory in the USA.¹²

¹⁰ Koen, N. Blaauw, R. and Wentzel-Viljoen, E. (2016). ["Food and Nutrition labelling: the past, the present and the way forward."](#) S Afr J Clin Nutr, 29(1), pp. 13-21.

¹¹ Cecchini, M. and L. Warin (2016), ["Impact of food labelling systems on food choices and eating behaviours: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized studies"](#), Obesity Reviews, Vol. 17/3, pp. 201-210,

¹² EUFIC (2017), [Global Update on Nutrition Labelling](#).



Over the last few years, in an attempt to improve the nutritional quality of consumers' food purchases and prompt industry reformulation, simplified labels recommended or mandated by governments have been implemented in 13 OECD countries and should also soon be in place in Israel¹³ Some are undertaken at the supra-national level like the Nordic Keyhole (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and Lithuania) and the Health Star Rating system (Australia and New Zealand).¹⁴

With the exception of warning labels, that are mandatory by nature, all other simplified FOP labels are voluntary. Their recommendation by public entities is often the result of consultation and dialogue among public entities, food chain stakeholders, consumers' associations and the research community.

3. Policies for encouraging healthier food choices

The complexity of food systems and the various synergies and trade-offs across different dimensions of the triple challenge means that effective policies need to be coherent across the three dimensions.¹⁵

Policy solutions to reduce unhealthy food consumption patterns focus on the consumer or on the actions of processors and retailers. They need to tackle unhealthy food choices via demand side public interventions such as the provision of public information and counselling. Education is key and has a profound impact on dietary choices and eating habits. Examples of such measures could include rules on promotion, advertising confectionery to children, and on unhealthy product compositions, especially those which target babies and children. A particular need is to target groups with poorer diets.

Working with industry is also needed at the supply-demand interface, e.g. in product reformulation or in introducing and testing labelling schemes.

Fiscal measures, including consumption taxes on products that are "unhealthy" when consumed excessively are needed but are prone to slippage (e.g. with consumers sourcing from other markets) and may be regressive in terms of their higher impact and incidence on those with lower incomes.¹⁶

In view of the current overweight and obesity rates and unhealthy diets, the role of government policies in encouraging healthier food choices is critical. Policies need to include demand side public interventions, voluntary collaboration with the food industry at the supply-demand interface, firmer regulations when public-private incentives are misaligned, and fiscal measures.

The food industry can be encouraged to change food product formulation, labelling or marketing strategies. Some governments have adopted or are considering adopting health-related taxes on food products. As of 1 October 2018, 12 OECD countries¹⁷ have health-related taxes in place at the central government level. Additionally, several health-related food taxes have recently been introduced at the local government level in the USA and in Spain. The taxes tend to be set on products with negative health outcomes and where consumption levels exceed by a wide margin the recommended intake.¹⁸

▪ EU policy on food labelling

As from December 2016, Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011¹⁹ requires most pre-packed foods to bear a nutrition declaration. It must provide the energy value and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrates, sugars, protein and salt of the food. The declaration must be presented in a legible tabular format on the packaging. Where space does not permit it, the information may be presented in linear format. This mandatory nutrition declaration is often provided on the back of food packaging. The content of the mandatory nutrition declaration may be supplemented voluntarily with the indication of the amounts of mono-unsaturates, polyunsaturates,

¹³ Australia, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Korea, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom.

¹⁴ A reflection on simplified FOP labels is occurring at the European level. Member States experts met in October 2018: https://ec.europa.eu/food/expert-groups/ag-ap/adv-grp_fchaph/wg_2018/presentations-2018_en#20181022.

¹⁵ OECD. *Achieving better policies for food systems*. Agriculture Policy Brief. January 2021. OECD. [Making coherent policies for food systems](#). Agriculture Policy Brief. January 2021.

¹⁶ OECD. Grégoire Tallard, Marcel Adenäuer, Koen Deconinck, and Gaëlle Gouarin. [Potential Impact of Dietary Changes on the Triple Challenge Facing Food Systems: Three Stylised Scenarios](#). 2022.

¹⁷ Belgium, Chile, Finland, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom.

¹⁸ Giner, C. and J. Brooks (2019-10-28), ["Policies for encouraging healthier food choices"](#), OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No. 137, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R1924>



polyols, starch, fibres, vitamins and minerals. This voluntary information must not be displayed to the detriment of space allocated to mandatory information. All the information must be expressed per 100g or per 100ml. It may also, in addition, be expressed per portion or per consumption unit of the product.

On 20 May 2020, the European Commission adopted the “Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system”, intended to form part of the European Green Deal. One of the main aims of this strategy is to reduce the negative impact of the current EU food system on environment and climate. It also supports the adoption of healthy and sustainable nutritional habits,²⁰ providing the necessary steps for the future revision of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC Regulation)²¹ to achieve a sustainable food labelling system. Therefore, one of the instruments that the strategy intends to use to achieve its goals is a “European harmonised front-of-pack nutritional labelling scheme by end 2022”, which aims to “improve consumers’ understanding of the nutritional value of foods when purchasing them”. The initiative wants to promote the adoption of healthier diets among EU citizens.

Member States have developed different models of nutritional labelling schemes over the years.²² The current debate particularly focuses on two specific nutritional labelling schemes: “Nutri-Score”, which was initially adopted by France in 2017, and “NutriInform”, which was adopted by Italy in 2020. On 3 February 2021, the European Commission asked the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) to provide scientific advice to support the development of a future EU-wide system for FOP nutrition labelling. EFSA is required to produce its evaluation by March 2022, with a public consultation on the draft by the end of 2021.²³

4. Way forward

Policy decisions should fundamentally be based on science and promoting healthier diets. Nutrition labelling policy should consider consumer use, interpretation and understanding of different nutrition labelling schemes, promoting sustainable healthy purchasing decisions. Value chain actors and consumers need to have appropriate levels of nutrition literacy to be able to understand the role health considerations play in purchasing decisions. What awareness raising and education initiatives are most effective? Who should be the primary target of which information and education initiatives – parents, children, others?²⁴

Furthermore, most research on FOP formats has been conducted in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Given the potential for variance, studies in other regions are needed to understand better local consumer attitudes. Research from South Africa²⁵ specifically highlights the need to conduct studies in developing countries as a priority. In addition, publicly available research on the actual impact of FOP nutrition labels is limited.

Little is known about whether consumers make long-term healthier food choices as a result of having used nutrition information. More research is needed to know to what extent do nutrition labelling schemes have to be standardised to help consumers cultivate healthy eating habits and on how can consumers be helped to make good use of nutrition labels to motivate them to eat healthier.

²⁰ The European Commission aims to establish ‘nutritional profiles’ limiting the promotion (via nutrition and health claims) of foods high in fats, sugars and/or salt. Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods (‘Claims Regulation’) already demanded the setting of nutritional profiles: the recent evaluation of that Regulation, published alongside the Farm to Fork Strategy, states that the setting of nutritional profiles remains a relevant and necessary measure to guarantee a high level of consumer protection. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R1924>

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169&from=FR>

²² CEP. Andrea De Petris and Victor Warhem. [European Front-of-pack Nutritional Labelling Scheme: How to Foster Consensus?](#). 2021.

²³ [EFSA’s scientific advice to inform harmonised front-of-pack labelling and restriction of claims on foods](#), 3.2.2021.

²⁴ EUFIC (2017), [Global Update on Nutrition Labelling](#).

²⁵ Koen, N. Blaauw, R. and Wentzel-Viljoen, E. (2016). [“Food and Nutrition labelling: the past, the present and the way forward.”](#) S Afr J Clin Nutr, 29(1), pp. 13-21.



5. Promoting increased knowledge about the F&V industry

Launched in the context of the United Nations (UN) 2021 International Year of Fruits and Vegetables^{26;27}, the COLEACP²⁸ through its FFM SPS and FFM plus programmes (funded by the EU and OACPS) and the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme²⁹ of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate launched an online series highlighting the significance of the F&V sector and its various dimensions.

The main objectives of the series are:

- Sharing knowledge of markets and operators working in local and export F&V markets
- Understanding the F&V sector contribution to sustainable production and consumption
- Promoting F&V contribution to healthy and nutritious diets
- Showcasing successes and innovations of private sector operators across the EU and Southern countries and lessons learned

The second session to be held on 29 March 2022 will discuss the need to encourage healthier food choices and the key role of F&V. Of significant importance is for producers and exporters of fruit and vegetables from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to understand the potential consequences in adopting labelling schemes required by some markets. Opportunities to analyse include increasing profitability, opportunities to access new markets and addressing consumers demand for healthier foods. Labelling schemes will be important for domestic, regional and international markets such as the EU.

²⁶ Consolidated text: Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, amending Regulations (EC) No 1924/2006 and (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EEC, Council Directive 90/496/EEC, Commission Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC and Commission Regulation (EC) No 608/2004 (Text with EEA relevance)

²⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02011R1169-20180101>

²⁸ <http://www.fao.org/fruits-vegetables-2021/en/>

²⁹ As a non-profit association of private sector operators, the COLEACP mission is to develop inclusive, sustainable trade in fruits, vegetables and food products, focusing on the ACP countries' trade with one another and with the EU. <https://www.coleacp.org/>

²⁹ OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme promotes international trade through the harmonisation of implementation and interpretation of marketing standards. <https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>



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PROGRAMME

Moderator: Isolina Boto, Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEACP

10:00-10:10 Welcome and introduction

José Brambila-Macías and Marie Russel, Fruit and Vegetables Scheme (quality and marketing standards), OECD

10:10-10:40 How can policies contribute to healthier food choices?

This panel will give an overview of policy options for encouraging healthier food choices and highlight the potential contribution of simplified nutritional labelling schemes

- A four-track policy approach for healthier food choices, Céline Giner, Agricultural Policy Analyst, OECD
- Examples of simplified nutritional labelling schemes: Israel (Green label) / Sweden (Keyhole) / France or Switzerland (Nutri-Score)

10:40-11:20 Fruit and vegetable sector: insights from operators

This panel will feature perspectives from operators in the F&V industry on the implementation of policies for encouraging healthier food choices and intended impacts on consumption.

- *Eugenia Boafo, New Product Development (NPD) Lead, HPW fresh & dry ltd., Ghana*
- *Guillaume Prim, Quality & Logistics Manager, SURAL-SACICC sas, France*
- *Valérie Tremblay, Director Quality and CSR, ProNatura, France*

Q&A session

11:20-11:30 Conclusion and way forward

