

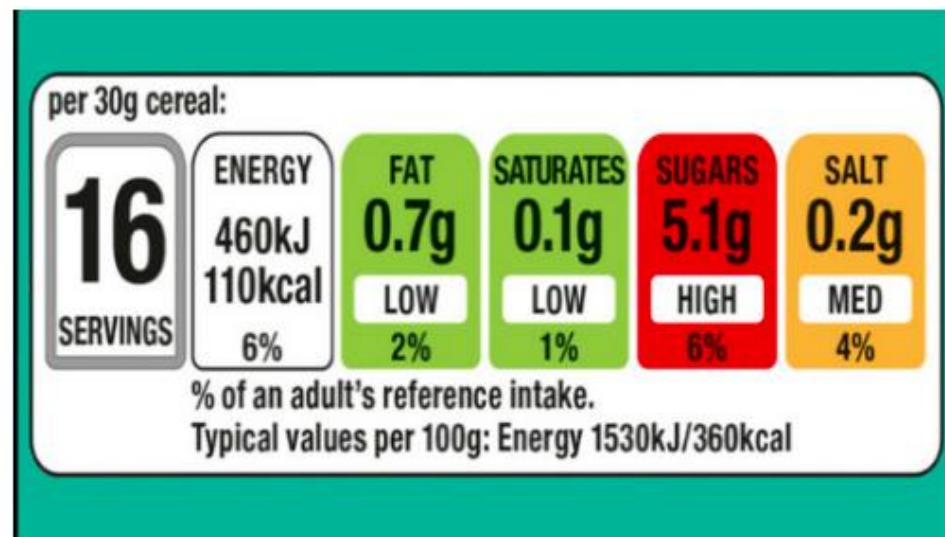


*“Promote nutrition labelling, according to but not limited to, international standards... for all pre-packaged foods ...”*

- World Health Organization Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NonCommunicable Diseases

# Nutrition Labeling Standards: protecting health and informing consumers

*Dr Anne Marie Thow  
University of Sydney*



# ***Nutrition Information Panels are easy to understand – for anyone with a microscope, calculator and a few hours to spend in the grocery aisle***

-Australian commentary

Example of Nutrition Information Panel - USA

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 cup (236ml)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 120	Calories from Fat 45
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 5g	8%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 20mg	7%
<b>Sodium</b> 120mg	5%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 11g	
<b>Protein</b> 9g	17%
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 30%	Iron 0% • Vitamin D 25%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

*“Information supplied should be for the purpose of providing consumers with a suitable profile of nutrients contained in the food and considered to be of nutritional importance. The information should not lead consumers to believe that there is exact quantitative knowledge of what individuals should eat in order to maintain health, but rather to convey an understanding of the quantity of nutrients contained in the product...”*

- Codex Alimentarius

# Evidence for the effect of interpretive front of pack labelling

- Increase consumer **awareness** of nutrition/health when shopping, increase **motivation** to choose healthier products
  - Most effective: Front of pack label, simple, low density of information (Systematic reviews: Hersey 2013; Campos 2011; van Kleef 2014; Graham 2012. Recent papers: Bialkova 2013; van Herpen 2012; Siegrist 2014)
- Increase consumer **understanding and interpretation** of nutrition information
  - Most effective: Nutrient specific label, incorporating text and colour (Systematic reviews: Hersey 2013; Hawley 2013; van Kleef 2014. Recent papers: Roberto 2012; Maubach 2014)
- Improve healthfulness of **purchasing/consumption** behaviour (Systematic reviews: Hersey 2013; Campos 2011; van Kleef 2014. Recent papers: Maubach et al 2014; Babio et al 2014)
- Stimulate **reformulation** of less healthy food products (Vyth et al 2010 – “Choices” logo)

# Effects differ by format of label: Need to consider policy objectives



Example of a traffic light symbol (UK) <sup>a</sup>



Example of a %GDA symbol (U.S., UK, and other European countries) <sup>b</sup>



Choices Programme (Example of a check-mark or tick symbol used internationally) <sup>c</sup>



**Guiding Stars<sup>®</sup>**  
Nutritious choices made simple<sup>®</sup>

Guiding Stars (Shelf-tag 1-3 star rating system used in U.S.) <sup>d</sup>

# Conclusion: international guidance would support implementation

---

- Strong rationale for government intervention:
  - Evidence that multiple formats is confusing for consumers (UK, Draper et al 2011)
  - Evidence that industry self regulation has limited compliance for less healthy foods (Aust, Carter et al 2013)
- Strong rationale for international support:
  - Global health problem and globalised food supply
  - Current standards do not address interpretive labelling
- Implementation would be supported by:
  - Systematic analysis of evidence base for best way to achieve different objectives
  - Recommendations for policy options based on evidence