Voluntary Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling

Introduction

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (EU FIC) allows companies to repeat some nutrition information front of pack (FoP). The provision of nutrition information FoP is voluntary but if provided it must meet the requirements set out in the EU FIC namely that:

- It should be provided in one of two formats: energy alone or energy plus fat, saturates, sugars and salt
- Its provision must meet legibility and font size requirements (EU FIC Article 13(2) and Appendix IV).
- It can be provided per 100g/ml only; per 100g/ml and per portion or on a per portion basis only. Where the information is provided on a per portion basis only, the absolute value for energy must be provided per 100g/ml in addition to per portion.
- % Reference Intakes (RIs) can be given on a per 100g/ml and/or per portion basis.
- Additional forms of expression are allowed if they meet the requirements set out in the EU FIC

Voluntary FoP nutrition labelling cannot be given in isolation; it must be provided in addition to the mandatory nutrition declaration.

UK Government Scheme

The UK Government has developed a voluntary FoP scheme that uses colour-coding as an additional form of expression. The colour-coding is designed to show consumers ‘at a glance’ whether a food is ‘high’, ‘medium’, or ‘low’ in fat, saturates, sugars and salt. Companies may in addition include the descriptors “High”, “Medium” or “Low” with the colours red, amber and green respectively to reinforce their meaning.

The colour coding is based on the content per 100g of the product. You may eat a lot more or a lot less than this depending on the product.

Examples:

N.B. Colour coding and HML text should not be applied to energy.

DH Guidance

On 19 June 2013 the Department of Health (DH) published detailed guidance on how to produce a front of pack nutrition label compliant with the recommendation on the use of colour coding. This includes:

- A step by step guide to producing a FoP label
- Detailed criteria for red, amber and green

In order to provide accurate information on your FoP label, companies need to know:

- The amount of energy, fat, saturates, (total) sugars and salt per 100g/ml and per portion.
- The size of a portion described in a manner easily identifiable and meaningful to consumers. For example, half a pack or one burger.
- The number of portions in a pack.

Basic Elements of Front of Pack with Colour Coding

A FoP label developed in accordance with the DH guidance will contain:

- Information on the energy value in kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal) per 100g/ml and in a specified portion of the product,
- Information on the amounts in grams of fat, saturated fat (“saturates”), (total) sugars and salt in grams, in a specified portion of the product,
- Portion size information expressed in a way that is easily recognisable by, and meaningful to the consumer. For example, ¼ of a pie or 1 burger,
- % RI information based on the amount of each nutrient and energy value in a portion of the food, and
- Colour coding of the nutrient content of the food red (High), amber (Medium) and green (Low).