

Simple energy-based front-of-pack label preferred by consumers

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Front-of-pack labelling schemes have been developed against a background of concerns about rising obesity levels. Research conducted by the European Food Information Council (EUFIC) in conjunction with Wageningen University, looked at the potential of different energy-based front-of-pack flags to engage consumers and help them understand the nutrition information on food labels. The most preferred option was calorie content per portion or per 100 g.

In this research, EUFIC tested eight different concepts, which varied in complexity of the energy-based information provided using qualitative research techniques. The most simplistic concept was “Calories per 100 g” or “Calories per portion”. The “full option” included calories per portion as well as energy information in relation to daily energy needs for men and women, and also the amount of exercise needed to burn off the calories contained within a portion of the product.

The energy-based concepts were tested amongst young adults, families and the elderly in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The results were remarkably consistent across all markets and consumer categories, identifying that consumers have a good understanding of the concept of calories but do not fully understand how to apply them. The simpler front-of-pack designs, showing just the number of calories per serving or per 100 g, were most preferred. Expression of calorie content per 100 g allowed for easier comparison between products, whilst calories per portion made calculation of actual intake easier, as long as the size of a ‘portion’ was well defined. References to daily energy needs were also well received, but complicated graphs and percentages were generally disliked.

The research concluded that consumers see front-of-pack nutrition information as truly innovative as it addresses the issue of time constraints when shopping.

For more information, see

[van Kleef E et al \(2007\). Consumer preferences for front-of-pack calories labelling. Public Health Nutrition, July 2nd, \[Epub ahead of print\].](#)