

# Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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**Paper for Discussion: Food Advisory Committee (FAC)  
'Review of Food Labelling 2001'**

## **Agenda Item 4**

Please see attached paper for discussion.

Following papers available from the secretariat

- Food Advisory Committee's Report: 'Review of Food Labelling 2001'
- Annex 1 for the press release and annex 2 for the executive summary detailing the findings of the qualitative research into consumer preferences for nutrition labelling.

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## Food Advisory Committee (FAC) 'Review of Food Labelling 2001'

### BACKGROUND

1. The former FAC last carried out a full review of food labelling legislation in 1990. The current review was carried out in response to the considerable range of changes in food production and processing that have taken place over the last decade.
2. The remit of the Committee's Subgroup was 'to review food labelling within the United Kingdom and produce a report with substantive recommendations for the guidance of the Food Standards Agency'. This review covers wide-ranging issues such as the purpose of the food label, nutrition labelling, GM labelling, labelling of allergens and the declaration of 'country of origin'.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Committee made a total of 32 recommendations. Recommendations 7 and 27 deal directly with nutrition labelling. Nutrition labelling is mandatory only when any form of nutrition claim has been made in the labelling or advertising of the food. In all other cases it is voluntary.
4. **Recommendation 27** "*Nutrition labelling should be reviewed with the intention of significant simplification to avoid the current, complex listing. The Committee believes that all foods must in future carry a statement of energy and fat content, in a standard format. Additional voluntary labelling should be in the same format (paragraphs 88-90).*"

### AGENCY ACTION

5. The Food Standards Agency has already carried out qualitative research into consumer preferences for nutrition labelling. The research, based on group and individual in-depth interview, compared eight different specimen labels (including the current standard layout) to see which layouts were easiest to read and understand. The research found that;
  - People generally check calories and fat first.
  - Fat content was widely checked and the most commonly avoided nutrient.
  - Salt was preferred to sodium as a clearer labelling term.
  - People understand that "trace" means a small amount, and feel that replacing it with "0" would be inaccurate and misleading.
  - Putting nutritional values as percentages of Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA) confuses people.

6. The preferred formats will now be subject to performance testing in a representative population sample. Please see annex 1 for FSA Website information and annex 2 for the executive summary detailing the findings of the qualitative research into consumer preferences for nutrition labelling.
7. Further quantitative research has now been commissioned.
8. **Members are invited to comment upon the recommendations relating to nutrition labelling or any other issues of relevance.**

**SACN Secretariat  
March 2002**