



Paper for discussion: SACN response to Nutrient Profiling Consultation

Agenda item: 5

Members were asked to comment on the Agency nutrient profiling consultation (General 16 attached). The full report is at;
<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/Consultations/ukwideconsults/nutrientprofiling>.

Member's responses to the consultation have been collated and general issues set out in the attached paper. Members are asked to offer constructive comments on the approach taken and to agree a SACN response to the consultation.

Members comments on the report itself will be forwarded in their entirety.

The paper will not be made available to the public as it is in draft form.

Background

The model was developed by an Agency funded consultancy, overseen by an ad hoc expert/stakeholder group, comprising independent nutritionists and dieticians (including representatives from industry and a consumer group) in addition to Agency and DH officials.

The model is a 'simple scoring' system that takes account of the balance of a range of nutrients in the food. The model therefore identifies foods high in fat, salt and sugar, while recognising the important contribution of dairy, meat, fish, and fruit and vegetable based products to a balanced diet.

As part of the consultation process, the Agency is holding an academic workshop on 25 February. The workshop (at which SACN is represented) will discuss the scientific basis of the model, the way in which it was developed, and what refinements may be necessary.

DRAFT SACN response to the Nutrient Profile consultation

General Comments

- 1) Generally the model was agreed to be a simple and clear system of nutrient profiling that is easily comprehensible for consumers and health professionals.
- 2) It was agreed that nutrient profiling is potentially a very valuable tool in informing the consumer about the health benefits of foods.
- 3) The model forms a workable and practical basis for nutrient profiling.

[Committee to agree]

Nutrient inclusion

- 4) Members agree that the exclusion of fibre and the lack of reference to wholegrain foods in the scoring system is not adequately reasoned.

[Committee to agree further work is required]

- 5) Members agree that the absence of any differentiation between fats in the scoring system is not adequately reasoned.

[Committee to agree further work is required]

- 6) Members note that subtracting the B and C nutrients from the A nutrients should be carefully examined. A food that scores highly for energy, fat and sugar should not be able to reach a score towards the healthier end of the scale by having high iron or calcium or omega 3 PUFAs for example since these will not mitigate potential adverse effects on health. Foods in this way could be fortified to become healthier options to get around negative sign-posting.

[Committee agree that this should be looked at carefully during testing stage]

- 7) Members note that rather than “eat plenty” use “healthy choice”; use “unhealthy choice – eat sparingly” rather than “eat sparingly”.

[Committee agree to forward this change]

- 8) Members are unclear if the evaluation of foods should be as consumers use them and therefore fortified or as pre-fortified.

[Committee to agree either pre-fortification or fortification]

Necessary further development

- 9) Members note that it is essential that the classifications the model produces are consonant with widely known dietary advice, rather than contradictory or confusing. It is important that the model is robust against ‘unhealthy’ manipulation.

[Committee to agree forwarding this point]

- 10) Members suggest that a pilot phase would be appropriate.

[Committee to agree forwarding this point]