



**Paper for agreement: Nutrient Profiling Model**

**Agenda item: 2**

On 12 September 2005 SACN held a meeting by conference call to discuss the Nutrient Profiling Model developed by the Agency to support Ofcom's work to further regulate the broadcast advertising of food high in fats, salt or sugar to children. This paper summarises the discussion. The Committee is asked to agree that the paper is a fair summary of the meeting and their views.

## **Assessment of Nutrient Profiling Model developed by Food Standards Agency**

1. This paper summarises the discussion of the SACN conference call on 12 September 2005, which took place as part of the consultation on the Nutrient Profiling Model. The Model has been developed by the Agency to support Ofcom's work to further regulate the broadcast advertising of food high in fats, salt or sugar to children.
2. To help inform discussions, members were provided with the following background papers:
  - Annex 1 – (SACN/05/22) – overview of the nutrient profiling model developed by the Food Standards Agency;
  - Annex 2 – research report describing the process by which the refined nutrient profiling model was developed;
  - Annex 3 – nutrient profiling consultation documents;
  - Annex 4 – worked example of how to apply the Nutrient Profiling Model to classify foods;

Written responses from SACN members who could not take part in the meeting were also considered (a summary of these are attached in annex A).

### **Background**

3. In February 2005, SACN considered an earlier version of the nutrient profiling model and supported the need for its development and the approach taken by the Agency. The Committee requested the opportunity for further comment when development of the model was taken forward. SACN members, Professor Annie Anderson and Professor John Cummings, were co-opted as SACN representatives onto the Expert Group on Nutrient Profiling that has overseen refinement of the model.

### **Discussion**

4. Written comments received were discussed.
5. Subject to consideration of the detailed proposals in Ofcom's forthcoming consultation, the refined model was considered a sufficiently robust tool to assist Ofcom in their work to further regulate the broadcast advertising of foods high in fat, salt or sugar to children. The Committee also supported the Agency's view that since the model had been specifically developed for this purpose, it would not be appropriate for other uses without reviewing its suitability for specific applications.
6. Members supported the refinements made to the model which was considered to have retained the accuracy of the original model, whilst being simpler to use. The refined model takes account of the level in 100g of foods of: energy, saturated fat, sugar, sodium, Non starch polysaccharide (NSP) fibre, protein, and fruits and vegetables. The inclusion of NSP fibre and total sugars as markers of carbohydrate quality addressed earlier concerns about the classification of cereal based products.
7. With the exception of nuts, it was agreed that the model classified foods and drinks appropriately and that the thresholds set for 'healthier choice' and 'less healthy' were suitable for the intended purpose.

8. The categorisation of nuts as 'less healthy' was considered inappropriate. Members recommended that for the purpose of this model, nuts should be treated in the same way as fruits and vegetables.
9. It was noted that an early response to the consultation had raised the issue that the model classified some processed foods high in fat, sodium or sugar as 'healthier' or 'intermediate' on the basis of their high protein content. Members recommended the introduction of cut-offs, so that foods that score particularly high for energy, saturated fat or sodium would automatically be classified as 'less healthy' irrespective of their NSP fibre, protein, or fruit and vegetable content.
10. It was agreed that a subgroup of SACN members, comprising Professor Alan Jackson, Professor Annie Anderson and Professor John Cummings, would review any action proposed by the Agency in response to scientific or technical comments submitted by stakeholders as part of the Agency's current consultation on the nutrient profiling model.

## **Annex A**

### **Summary of written comments received**

Written comments included observations in relation to the following:

- The usefulness or not of classifying foods as good/bad/unhealthy/healthy.
- The current state of the evidence base in relation to the effect of advertising.
- The need for a scheme that can stimulate product development.
- The usefulness of analytical measures for NSP fibre.
- Problems in defining and quantifying fruit and vegetables.
- Problems in scoring products that are prepared at home.
- Problems around scoring foods prepared in small portions or consumed in large volumes.