



AD HOC NUTRIENT PROFILING CONFERENCE CALL
28th November 2008, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH

Minutes

Chairman	Professor Peter Aggett (via telephone)
Members	Professor Annie Anderson (via telephone) Dr Tony Williams (via telephone) Professor Ann Prentice
External attendees	Professor Judy Buttriss (Nutrient Profiling Review Panel)
Government Observers	Mrs Rosemary Hignett (FSA) Dr Alison Tedstone (FSA) Dr Karen Powell (FSA) Ms Julie Lucas (FSA) Dr Sheela Reddy (DH) (via telephone)
Secretariat	Ms Lynda Harrop (FSA)

Chair's welcome

1. The Chair welcomed Members and external attendees to this ad hoc meeting which had been called to discuss the recommendations of the nutrient profiling Review Panel. The Chair confirmed that although all SACN Members had been invited, the majority were unable to participate. Apologies were received from Professors Alan Jackson, Tim Key, Ian MacDonald, Peter Kopelman, Sheila Bingham; Doctors Anita Thomas, Paul Haggarty, David Mela and Mrs Stella Walsh and Mrs Christine Gratus.

Agenda item 1 – Nutrient profiling review paper (SACN/NP/08/01)***Introduction and background***

2. Professor Judy Buttriss from the Nutrient Profiling (NP) Review Panel presented a brief history on the development of the nutrient profiling model and an overview of how the NP model works. The main steps of the review process were outlined as being:
 - The Review Panel was set up in September 2007 and chaired by Professor Mike Kelly (Public Health Excellence Centre Director, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence), and included representation from SACN (Professor Annie Anderson).
 - In September 2007 the Panel consulted stakeholders to identify any practical and technical issues arising from use of the model. The Review Panel considered all the issues raised by stakeholders, with scenario testing where appropriate.
 - Four of the issues raised were identified by the Panel as needing further consideration. These were the 100g base of the model, the addition of categories, application of the model to adverts featuring recipes or serving suggestions and the protein cap.
 - Protein is used in the model as a proxy for calcium, iron and n-3 fatty acids. Following SACN's discussion of the NP model (paper SACN/05/27), a protein cap was introduced to prevent foods that were high in saturated fat, salt or sugars from passing the model by virtue of their high protein content.
 - The Review Panel hosted an academic workshop in February 2008 to seek input on these four issues from a wider field of expertise in the areas of public health and nutrient profiling. Workshop participants concluded that the application of the NP model to assess product recipes and serving suggestions and the use of a protein cap should be considered further.
 - The Review Panel commissioned further scenario testing to investigate the impact of raising the threshold at which the protein cap applies and removing it altogether on a wider range of foods, in particular foods that might be advertised to children. This demonstrated that very few foods moved from 'less healthy' to 'healthier'. There was also, in general, better discrimination within the breakfast cereal category.
 - The Review Panel considered independent advice on the likelihood that manufacturers might add protein to foods as a device to improve their NP scores, and hence enable them to pass the model.

- Having considered all of the available evidence on testing of the protein cap modifications and arguments about the scientific rationale for its inclusion, the Review Panel concluded that the protein cap should be removed and these recommendations were put out to a 12 week public consultation in July 2008.
- Comments and views received during the consultation were considered by the Review Panel at its meeting on 24 October 2008 along with an assessment of the impact of removing the protein cap on up to date nutrient composition data on a range of foods.
- The Review Panel was of the view that the protein cap should be removed from the NP model but acknowledged that the impact of this modification needed to be monitored.
- The Review Panel agreed that it would need to consider SACN's views on its draft recommendations before finalising them.

Review Panel's draft recommendations

3. Following the extensive review and consultation process, the Review Panel draft recommendations were:
 - 1) The Review Panel considered the scientific basis for the protein cap and concludes that it should be removed from the nutrient profiling model.
 - 2) The Review Panel also recommends that not before a minimum of 12 months has passed following removal of the protein cap, the impact of this modification on the advertising landscape should be assessed.
 - 3) With removal of the protein cap, the Review Panel considers that the NP model is a scientifically robust tool that effectively differentiates food and drink products on the basis of their nutritional composition.

Members' views

4. SACN Members were informed that the purpose of the meeting was to obtain their views on the Review Panel's draft recommendations, in relation to the effectiveness of the NP model at its intended use; to differentiate foods on the basis of their nutritional composition, in the context of Ofcom's television broadcast advertising controls. The

SACN Committee thanked Professor Buttriss for her clear exposition and asked her to relay its appreciation of the Panel's work to the Panel members.

5. The Chair asked Members for their views on the draft recommendations and the following points were raised in discussion:
- Members agreed that the existing model was an effective tool for categorisation of foods on the basis of their nutrient composition.
 - Based on the testing undertaken by the Review Panel, Members agreed that removing the protein cap would have only a small effect on the number of foods that pass the model.
 - Members were not convinced that the application of the model was too complex for end users. Simplification by removing the protein cap would therefore not necessarily be a significant benefit to them.
 - There was concern from some Members that removal of the protein cap would mean that products with relatively high sugar levels, such as some breakfast cereals would be able to pass the model. There was also some concern that if the protein cap were removed, protein or fibre or both might be added to foods to improve their scores and pass the model.
 - There was concern from some Members that removal of the protein cap would permit one current variety of potato crisps to pass the model. If this product were consequently advertised during children's viewing times, the purchasing of other much less healthy products of the same manufacturer could be stimulated by brand recognition and association.
 - It was noted that a number of products had moved from being classed as 'less healthy' to 'healthier' during the course of the Review (under the current model). This indicated that further reformulation might enable additional products to pass the model in the future, regardless of whether or not the protein cap was removed. However, while the removal of the protein cap may result in a higher number of high sugar products passing the model, it may also encourage reformulations aimed at reducing salt, fat and sugar content.
 - Where possible monitoring of product reformulation should be undertaken.

6. It was noted that the Review Panel had received independent advice from SACN member Dr David Mela and Dr Terry Sharpe a food scientist from Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association on the likelihood that manufacturers may add protein to improve NP scores. The Review Panel had been advised this was unlikely since protein is an expensive ingredient and is difficult to add without affecting the quality and shelf-life of a product. It was also informed that in some cases the nutrient composition data from retailer and manufacturer websites had been updated since January 2008 when original testing was conducted which may have accounted for some of the small changes in protein content of breakfast cereals.

7. Members agreed that if the protein cap were to be removed, the effect of this would need to be monitored, in order to identify any unintended consequences of this with particular reference to the sugar contents of foods which are able to pass the model, and the possible addition of protein to foods. It was agreed that such work should not be undertaken before 12 months after implementation of the change to allow time for reformulated products to appear on the market. It was noted that the FSA would be able to monitor the reformulation of products and their assessment by the modified NP model, and that children's consumption patterns are monitored as part of the FSA's rolling national diet and nutrition survey (NDNS) programme. Monitoring of product advertising is the responsibility of Ofcom and the Department of Health is responsible for monitoring advertising and promotion trends across all media.

Conclusion

8. In conclusion, the Committee agreed the following comments on the Review Panel's advice:
 - Either with or without the protein cap, the NP model is an effective mechanism that differentiates food and drink products on the basis of their nutritional composition.
 - The protein cap could be removed from the model with limited impact on the classification of foods.
 - Removing the protein cap would simplify the model, however SACN was concerned that the full impact of such a change is uncertain and it was not clear what benefits this would create.

- Members were concerned about the implications of reclassifying some foods from ‘less healthy’ to ‘healthier’.
- If the protein cap were removed, the effect of this would need to be monitored for any unintended consequences for product composition, in particular to identify any addition of protein to foods in order to pass the model, not before 12 months after implementing the change.

Agenda item 2 – AOB

Next steps

9. The Secretariat confirmed that the draft minutes would be circulated to Members in attendance for finalisation before being considered by the NP Review Panel on 18th December 2008.
10. The Review Panel’s final recommendations will be presented to the FSA Board in March 2009.
11. The Chair closed the meeting, thanking Members for their time and input on this issue over the past few months.

Meeting close