

Making Healthier Choices Easier

Signpost Labelling

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Why we need front of pack signpost labelling

UK consumers:-

- find current nutritional labelling difficult to use and they would welcome an easier "at a glance" system of labelling (Nutrition Labelling research report, Foods Standards Agency, Nov 2001)
- eat too much saturated fat (saturated fat provides **14.3%** of food energy compared with the recommended level of 11%)
- eat too much sugar ('added' sugar provides **16.5%** of food energy compared with recommended level of 11%)
- eat too much salt (currently average salt consumption is 9.5g compared with recommended 6g)



Government Commitments

- make healthier choices easier by:
 - **improving the nutritional information found on the front of packs**
 - changing the types of foods that are promoted
 - reformulation of products
 - setting nutritional targets for school meals, vending
 - public information campaign on obesity

Source: Public Health White Paper; Choosing Health, making healthier choices easier



Government Commitments cont.

“ Our goal is, by early 2006, for there to be:

- a clear, straightforward coding system
- that is in common use, and
- that busy people can understand at a glance which foods can make a positive contribution to a healthy diet, and which are recommended to be eaten only in moderation or sparingly”

Source: *Public Health White Paper; Choosing Health, making healthier choices easier*



Agency's Signpost Labelling Objectives

- help consumers make informed choices
- allow consumers to quickly and correctly identify whether a product is a healthier option or one high in fat, salt or sugar
- help consumers make comparisons between products, by quickly identifying which one is lower in fat, salt or sugar and which is higher
- be easy and clear to understand by as wide a range of consumers as possible (particularly with respect to age, socio-economic and ethnic group)



Agency consumer research (2004 - 2006)

- **Preference** - what signpost formats appeal to consumers
- **Performance** - how do consumers use and understand the information provided in the signpost
- **Execution** - design of strongest performing signposts
- **Application of Signpost on products** - consumer use of Schemes



1st phase Qualitative Consumer Research - Nov 04

- Focus groups to investigate signpost preference issues
- Range of ages, socio-economic class, ethnicity. (C2DE bias)
- Examine strengths and weaknesses of 5 options

Main Findings

- Support for front of pack signpost which included red, amber and green colours
- Consumers indicated they would use the information to
 - a) choose between products
 - b) re-evaluate habitual purchases



Consumer Research - Nov 04

Concepts tested



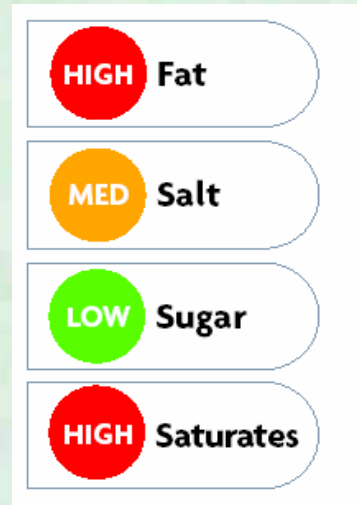
Simple Traffic Light (STL)



Extended Traffic Light



Healthy Eating Logo



Multiple Traffic Light (MTL)



GDA Key Nutrients



2nd Phase Qualitative Consumer Research - March 05

- **Explored consumer preference for 7 different GDA based formats - research informed by stakeholder meeting.**

Outcomes of stakeholder meeting

- Further GDA based signpost variations should be tested
- MTL, STL and an optimised GDA format should go into quantitative performance testing
- Establish a “Signpost Working Group” representing manufacturers, retail, industry and consumer groups, to feed in ideas on the best way for Agency to undertake further research.



Consumer Research - Mar 05

7 GDA based options tested

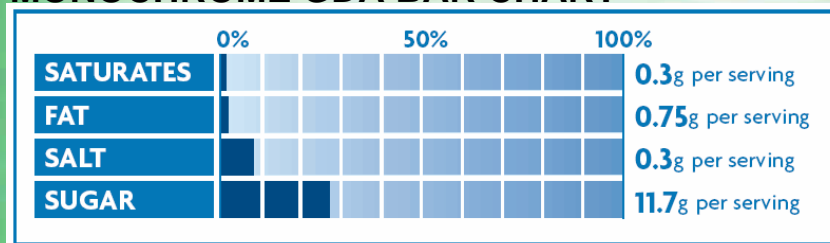
GDA CONCEPT USED IN 1st PHASE RESEARCH



MONOCHROME GDA (MGDA)

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|
| CALORIES | 155 per serving | GDA 2000 |
| SATURATES | 0.3g per serving | GDA 20g |
| FAT | 0.75g per serving | GDA 70g |
| SALT | 0.3g per serving | GDA 6g |
| SUGAR | 11.7g per serving | GDA 40g |

MONOCHROME GDA BAR CHART

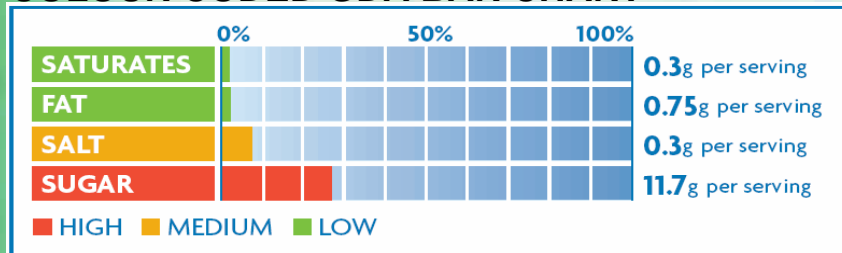


COLOUR CODED GDA (CGDA)

| | | |
|------------------|---------|-------------------|
| SATURATES | GDA 20g | 0.3g per serving |
| FAT | GDA 70g | 0.75g per serving |
| SALT | GDA 6g | 0.3g per serving |
| SUGAR | GDA 40g | 11.7g per serving |

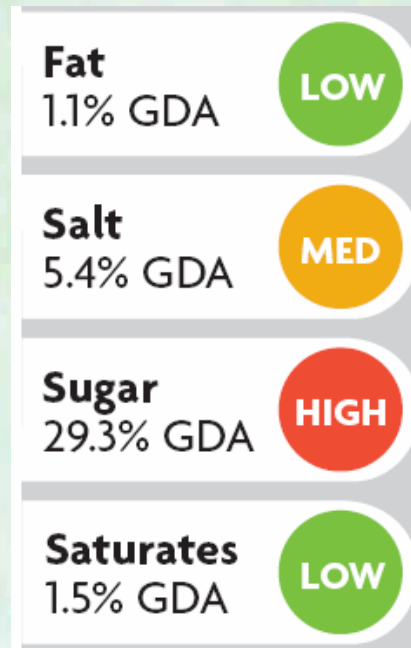
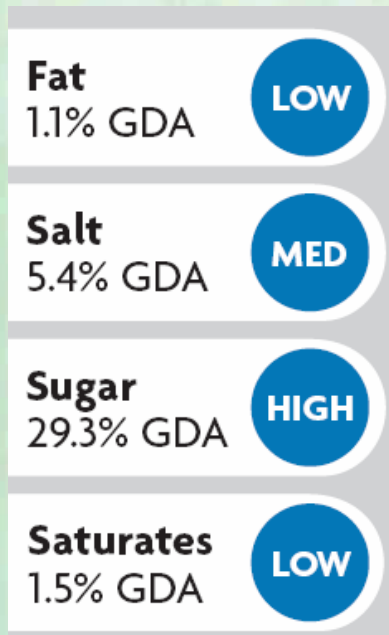
■ HIGH ■ MEDIUM ■ LOW

COLOUR CODED GDA BAR CHART



Consumer Research - Mar 05

GDA information incorporated into MTL



Consumer Research - Mar 05

Main Findings

- Consumers found colour coding and use of High, Medium and Low descriptors helpful and straightforward to understand
- Some consumers found per serving/GDA information and percentages confusing
- Some consumers found Bar charts difficult to interpret
- Colour-coded GDA option (**CGDA**) seemed most promising;



Consultation (Mar - May 2005)

- Results of qualitative GDA optimisation study
- Choice of formats for performance research - STL, MTL, CGDA, MGDA and inclusion of a no signposting benchmark,
- Outline methodology for performance research



3rd Phase Quantitative Consumer Research - June 05

Four signpost formats (STL, MTL, CGDA, MGDA) + 'no signposting' benchmark tested

- Questionnaire-based Quantitative consumer research with over 2,600 individuals across UK
- Performance - Individual product test and comparative product test
- Preference
- Products

Qualitative Study (July 2005)

- Use and understanding of best performing signposts
- Signpost Application

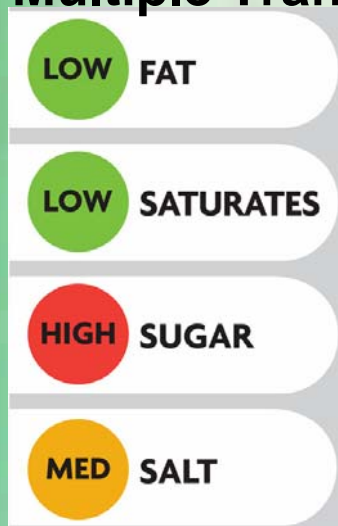


Consumer Research - June 05

Simple Traffic Light (STL)



Multiple Traffic Light (MTL)



Colour- GDA (CGDA)

| | Per serving | GDA |
|------------------|-------------|-----|
| FAT | 7.7g | 70g |
| SATURATES | 2.0g | 20g |
| SUGAR | 42.4g | 40g |
| SALT | 2.0g | 6g |

■ HIGH ■ MEDIUM ■ LOW

Monochrome - GDA (MGDA)

| | Per serving | GDA |
|------------------|-------------|-----|
| FAT | 7.7g | 70g |
| SATURATES | 2.0g | 20g |
| SUGAR | 42.4g | 40g |
| SALT | 2.0g | 6g |



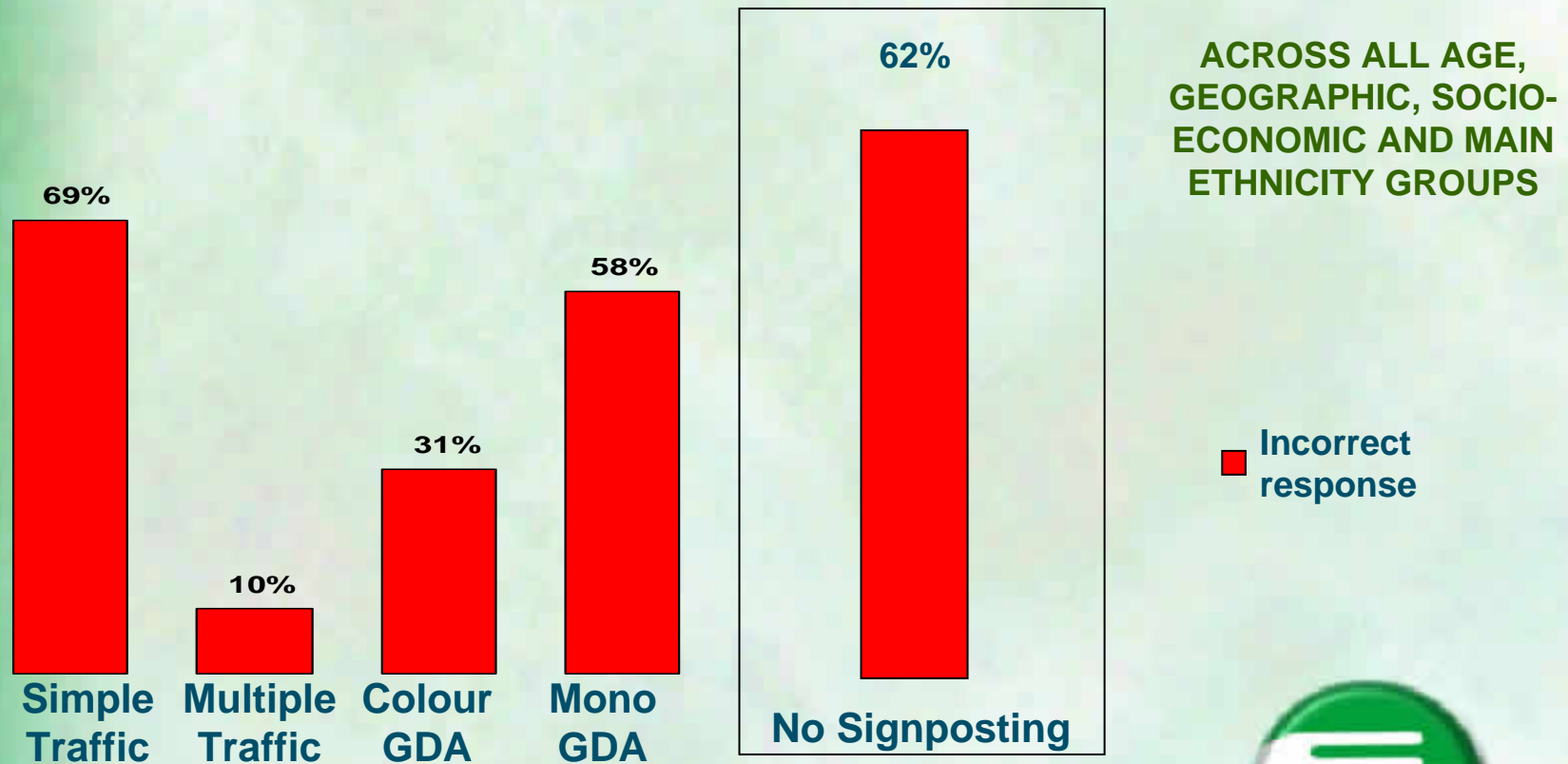
Consumer Research - June 05

Main Findings

- Consumers reported that signposting would be useful when making healthier food choices
- The majority of consumers were able to use MTL and CGDA correctly to make decisions about the nutrient content of foods
- Consumers were most likely to use colour-coding to respond, however they liked the reassurance of per serving information
- **MTL** and **CGDA** emerged as strongest concepts and considered further with focus groups



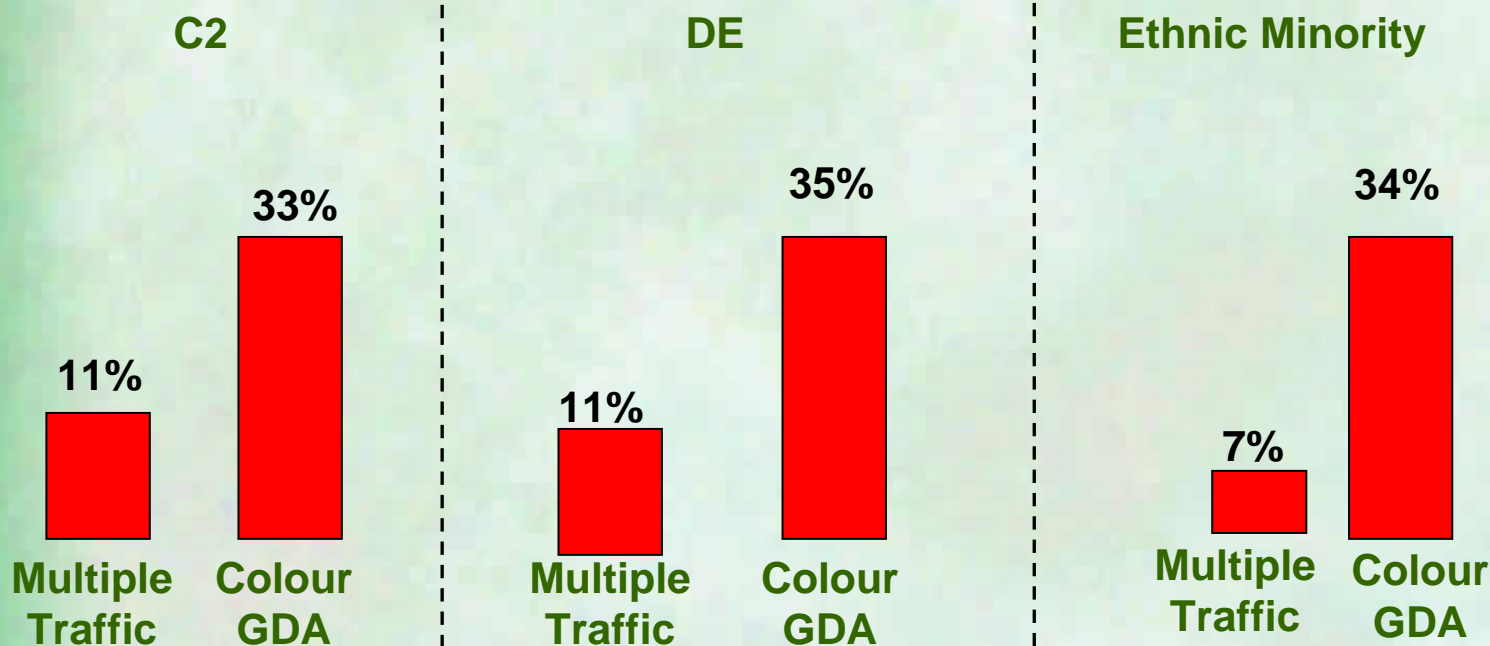
Individual Product – Proportion of Incorrect responses across all those who used signposting



Using signposting produces significantly lower levels of incorrect responses with MTL and C-GDA.



Individual products - Proportion of Incorrect responses. Breakdown by those who used signposting



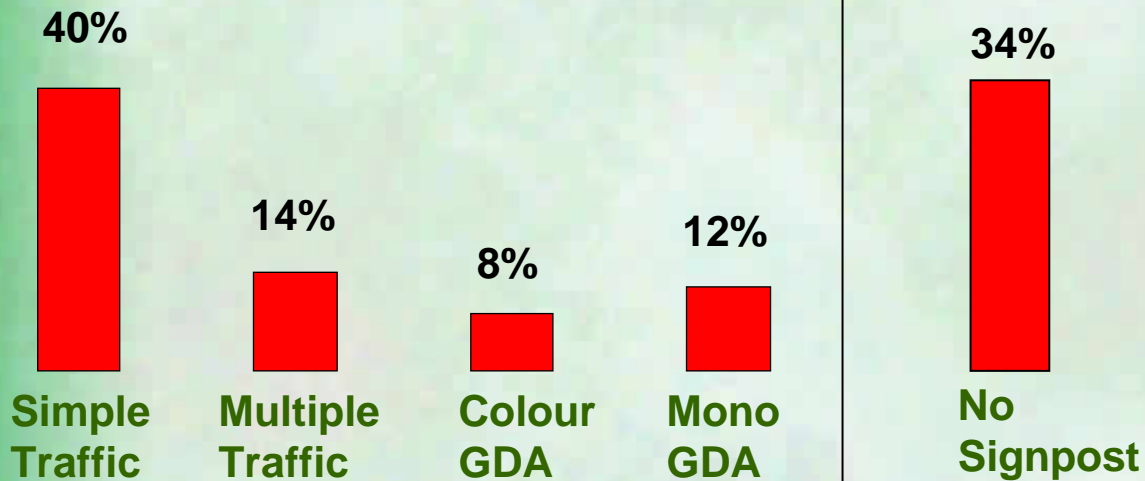
Consistent with the total sample results the level of incorrect responses among C2 and DE groups and Main Ethnic groups is significantly lower when using MTL compared with C-GDA.

 Incorrect response



Comparison of 2 products – Proportion of incorrect responses.

Breakdown by those who used signposting



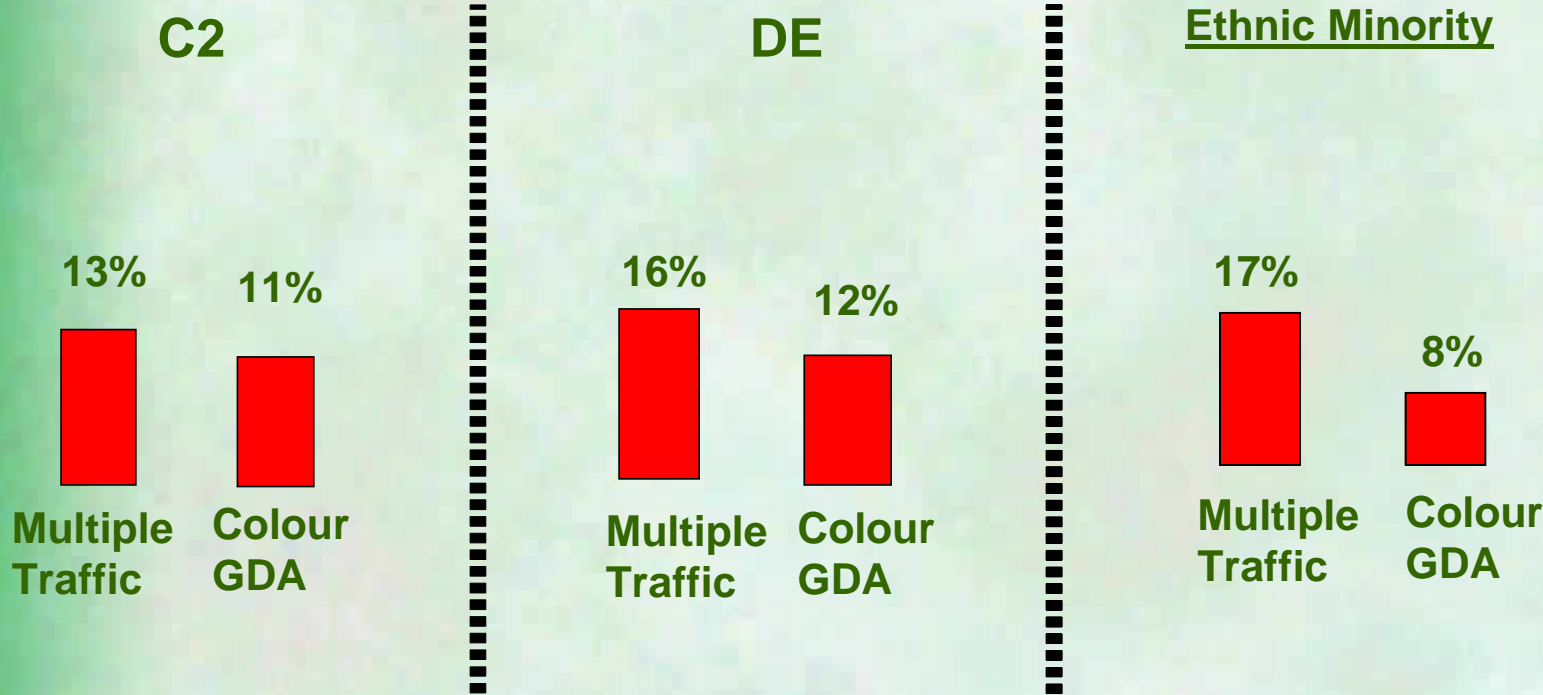
ACROSS ALL AGE,
GEOGRAPHIC, SOCIO-
ECONOMIC AND MAIN
ETHNICITY GROUPS

■ Incorrect response

Colour GDA elicits less incorrect answers than all other concepts and No Signposting. Levels of incorrect responses also very low with MTL and Mono GDA.



Comparison of 2 products - Proportion of Incorrect responses. Breakdown those who used signposting

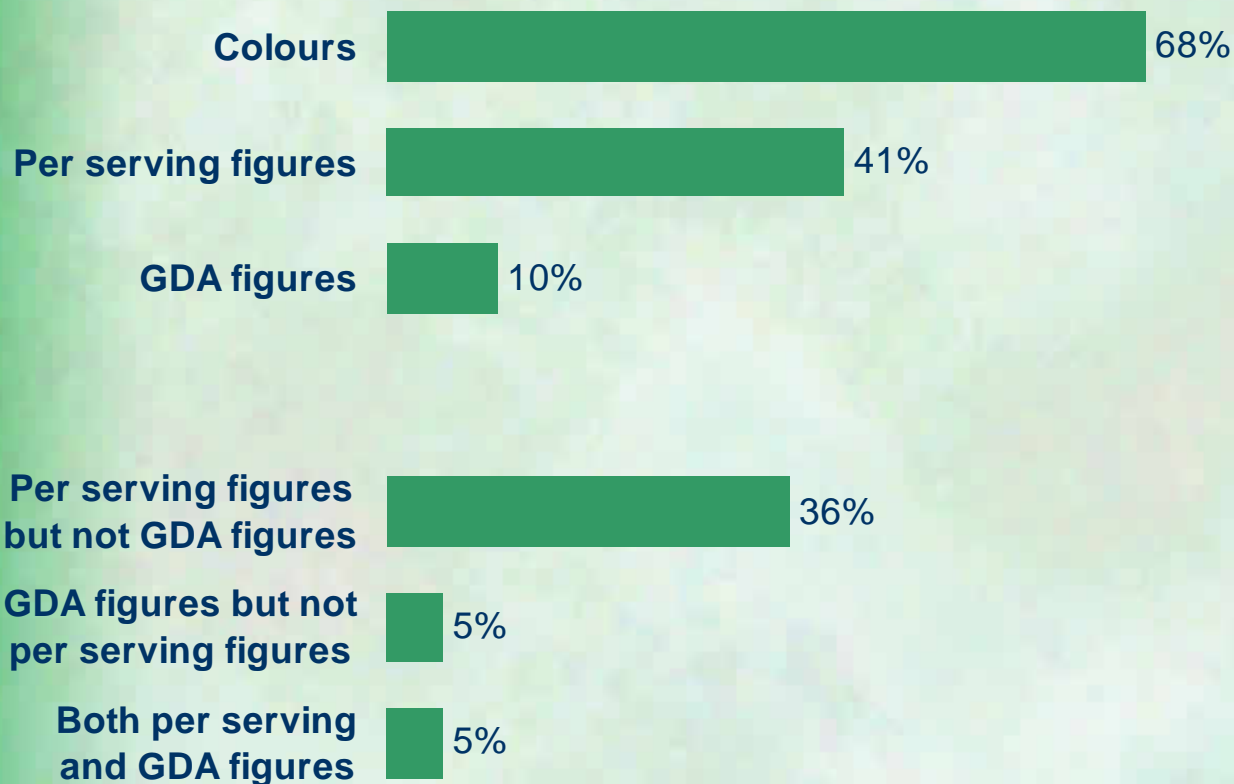


Within C2 subgroup there is no statistically significant difference in level of incorrect responses between MTL and C-GDA. Among DE and Ethnic minority groups, the level of incorrect responses was significantly lower for CGDA than for MTL.

 Incorrect response



Information Used to Answer Questions on Nutrient Content in products (CGDA Concept only)



Consumer Attitudes to Signpost Labelling: Products signposting should be applied to

Ready Meals



Perhaps the most obvious to respondents, who cite a lack of knowledge of what such products contain and a suspicion that they will be unhealthy.

Breakfast
Cereals



A high degree of cynicism regarding manufacturers' claims coupled with the high volume of consumption, particularly by children.

**Coated meat,
fish and
poultry
products,
sausages,
burgers, pies**



The high volume and frequency of consumption of products such as burgers, sausages. In addition, meal centres are often considered 'processed foods' and likely to be 'unhealthy.'

Pizzas and
Sandwiches



Products that constitute a 'meal in themselves' have an obvious need for signposting.



Signposting Consultation Activities

- Aug to Nov 2005 - Agency held pre-consultation meetings with stakeholders, which included retailers, manufacturers, consumer and public health groups
- Nov 05 to Feb 06 - Agency consulted on :
 - draft **guidance on technical issues** associated with format and application of the proposed scheme
 - **nutritional criteria** underpinning the scheme
 - a partial **Regulatory Impact Assessment**
- Review of Sugar GDA in context of front of pack signpost labelling (Dec 05-Feb 06)



Review of Sugar GDA in context of front of pack signpost labelling (Dec 05-Feb 06)

- The Agency convened a Panel to review the suitability of 90g GDA value for total sugars as basis for nutritional criteria in signpost scheme.
- The 90g figure was considered too high and a 60g benchmark was recommended instead.
- The 60g figure is based on the COMA recommendation on NMES intake plus an allowance for intakes of intrinsic and milk sugars from manufactured foods.
- Views were sought on application of 60g benchmark to determine the amount of sugar for the high (red) band has been sought (15g per 100g).



Agency's Nutritional Criteria for Colour coded Signposting Scheme

- **Low (green)** criteria replicate that proposed in EU regulation on the use of Nutrition and Health Claims currently under negotiation
- **High (red)** based on existing Agency advice on what contributes 'a lot' for a nutrient (25% GDA). A per portion criteria of 30% GDA is applied to foods eaten in large portion sizes (250g or more).
- **Medium (amber)** banding is used when a food does not satisfy criteria for 'high' or 'low'.

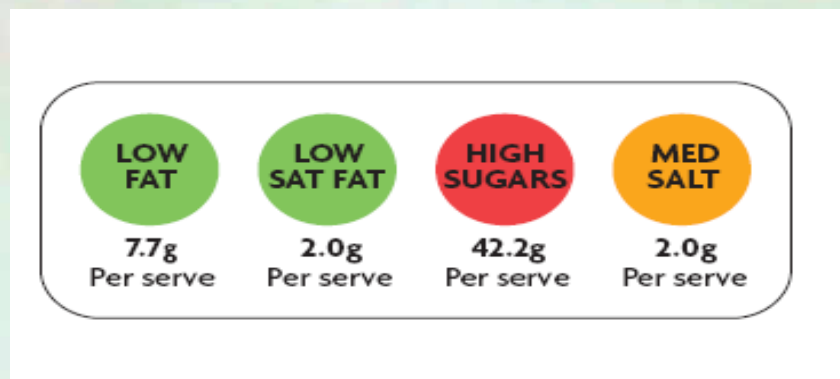
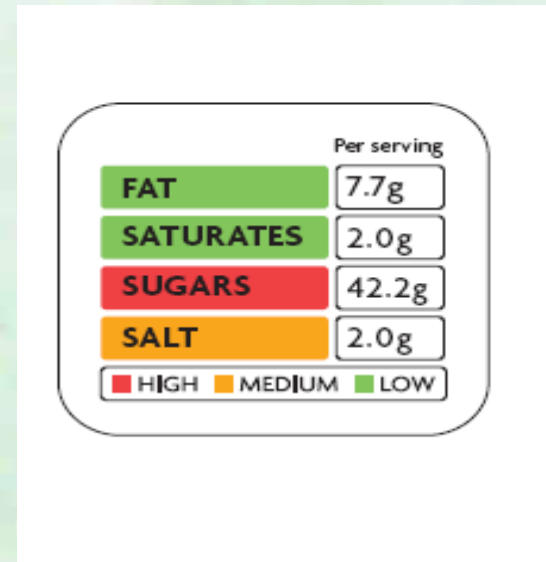
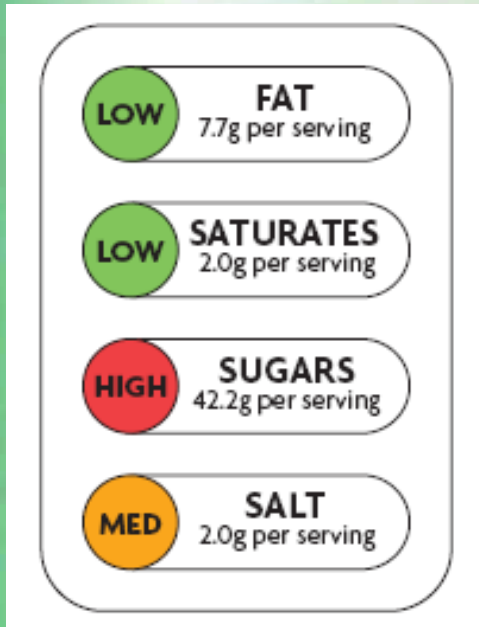


Board Meeting - March 9 2006

- The Agency Board recommended that voluntary signpost labelling is based on **four core principles**:
 1. Provide separate information on **fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt**
 2. Use **red, amber or green** colour coding to indicate whether levels of these nutrients are high, medium or low
 3. Use **nutritional criteria developed by the FSA** to determine the colour code
 4. Give information on the **levels of nutrients** in a product

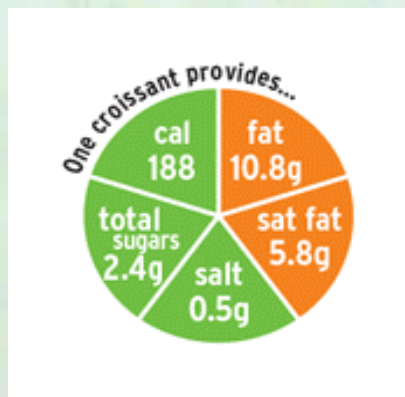


Illustrations of signpost designs that meet the Agency's core recommendations



Examples of signpost labels on products in the UK market that meet the Agency's core recommendations

Sainsburys



Waitrose



ASDA has indicated that it will also be adopting Agency recommendations shortly



Signposts with GDA information

- Various research shows that consumers **do not know how to use percentage GDA information** correctly and may be **misled** by it.
- Agency's recommended approach provides sufficient flexibility on design aspects to allow for the inclusion of additional information on calories or GDA, which might be helpful for some consumers.
- The Agency intends to undertake further research evidence on consumer understanding of percentage GDA information and issue advice to help consumers use it.



What Next?

- The Agency is in the process of finalising:
 - its technical guidance for businesses on how to apply the Agency's front of pack signpost labelling approach and,
 - web based material on signposting which is aimed at consumers.
- The Agency will continue to:
 - encourage manufacturers and retailers to adopt the Agency approach to signpost labelling,
 - highlight its concerns about schemes that are not considered to be in the consumers interest.
- The Agency is discussing with stakeholders how best to take forward work to independently assess the impact of signpost labelling schemes used in the UK market place on consumer behaviour.



Contact us

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