

Nutritional labelling: a new system for food transparency

Paris, May 15, 2017 – *Alcimed, a consulting company specializing in innovation and the development of new markets, examined Nutri-Score, the new voluntary nutritional labelling system which will be available in France from next April.*

A need to improve nutritional information for consumers

Advertisements, recommendations of healthcare professionals, dietary controversies... every day, the contemporary eater is exposed to a real "dietary cacophony", defined by Claude Fishler as a multitude of more or less injunctive and contradictory messages that induce a difficulty in disentangling the "true" from the "false". Furthermore, the labels on food products are difficult to interpret: they are not easily understood by the uninformed consumer leading to inequality in choice when it comes to supermarket shelves.

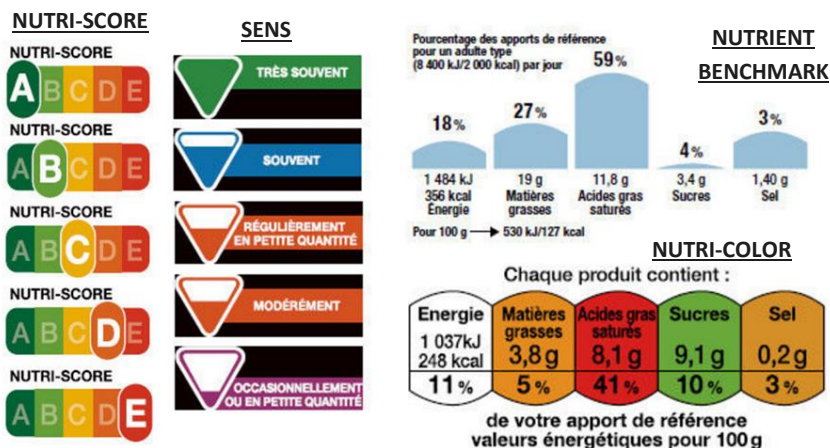
The possibility of affixing a nutrition logo that can be understood by everyone is part of a quest for transparency, but above all it contributes to solving public health problems related to food (obesity, diabetes, etc.) by helping consumers make informed choices in favor of their health.

An experiment in purchasing conditions to evaluate different labelling systems

In addition to the elements mandatory on the food label, the law of 26 January 2016 on the modernization of the health system foresees the establishment of a simplified graphic information system on food packaging, with the aim of curbing obesity. The system relies on a nutritional "score" calculated by an algorithm based on the nutritional composition of the product and aims to inform consumers about the quality of foodstuffs.

A three-month trial under purchasing conditions covering 60 stores was launched in September 2016 in France to evaluate four labelling proposals:

- The Nutri-Score or 5C, led by Prof. S. Hercberg from Inserm, assigns a score from A to E with an associated color system ranging from green to red.
- The Simplified Nutrition Labelling System (SENS), proposed by the Federation of Trade and Distribution (FCD), establishes four color triangles corresponding to recommended consumption frequencies.
- The nutrient benchmark, already present in France, displays the contribution of energy, fat, sugars, salt and saturated fatty acids in a single serving and recommends a daily amount for these compounds.
- The nutri-color or traffic light, in place in the United Kingdom, classifies the amounts of energy, sugar, salt, fat and saturated fatty acids into three colors according to their content.

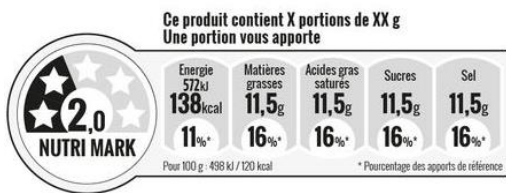


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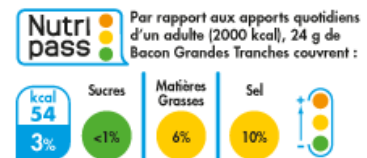
Following this study, the Ministry of Health selected the Nutri-Score system. It is therefore the one which will be adopted for optional labelling on food packaging from next April. As it stands, the INCO (Consumer Information) Regulation only foresees voluntary application.

A nutritional enhancement challenge for players in the agri-food industry

While the Ministry of Health welcomes the results obtained by the Nutri-Score, this decision is not unanimously supported by food manufacturers, who consider this system too stigmatizing for their products. Indeed, it highlights the composition of the product without taking into account the global context of consumption and in particular the frequency or even the portion sizes. Six major groups in the sector have therefore come together to propose their own labelling system, based on indications per portion and not per unit of weight or volume.



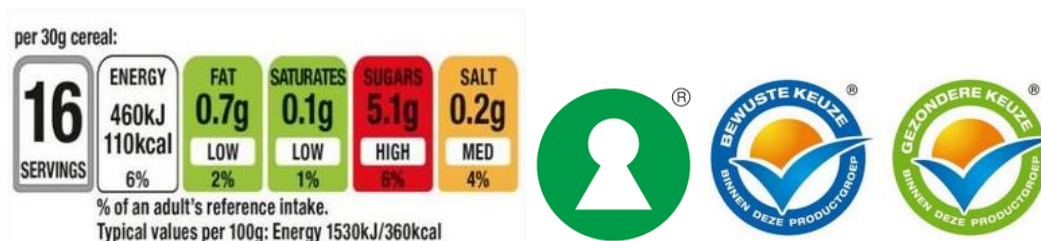
Manufacturers have often taken the lead and set up labelling systems to meet the nutritional challenges related to public health issues and the strong need for reinsurance and consumer transparency.



For example, McDonald's introduced a common nutritional labelling system for all its restaurants¹ in 2006 and Coca Cola, although long against it, adopted the existing traffic light system in the United Kingdom in 2015. The "choices" logo, originally developed in the Netherlands, has been revised on behalf of the Unilever-supported "Choice International Foundation" and is authorized by the European Commission². Some distributors are also implementing methods to simplify information, such as Intermarché with its NutriPass launched in 2006 or Leclerc's NutriMark.

A non-agreed future on a common European labelling

While France has now positioned itself in favor of the Nutri-Score system, other countries have made different choices. Implemented in 2006, the graphic representation of traffic lights has only been officially recommended by the British government since 2013 and is present on approximately 60% of the products. Several studies have shown that the nutritional information expressed with this logo improves the interpretation of nutritional information compared to the % Daily Nutrient Reference (DNR), the monochrome equivalent. In Sweden, the "green Keyhole" health logo, developed in 1989 by the Swedish National Food Administration and widely known to consumers, has since been extended to other countries such as Denmark and Norway. The Netherlands also uses a health logo in the form of a circle and a tick.



Examples of nutritional labels: traffic light (UK), green Keyhole (Sweden), circle with tick (the Netherlands)

The Member States of the European Union are currently free to propose forms of presentation that complement the existing nutritional labelling, but the European Commission will issue a report in 2017 with a view on its harmonization.

¹ <http://www.mcdonalds-donneescorporate.fr/nutrition/un-nouveau-systeme-dinformation-nutritionnelle>

² <http://www.ipubli.inserm.fr/bitstream/handle/10608/6522/?sequence=24>



These developments are leading manufacturers to have to examine the various labelling options to understand their possible advantages and restrictions. In the event of strong constraints and particularly penalizing stigmatization, the reformulation of certain recipes could also be considered, which would not be without difficulties.

In any case, manufacturers will have to continue to strengthen their contribution to consumer nutrition education and resume a potentially challenging dialogue.

ABOUT ALCIMED – www.alcimed.com

Founded in 1993, ALCIMED is an innovation and new business consulting firm specialized in life sciences (healthcare, biotech, agri-food), chemicals, energy as well as in aeronautics, space, defense and public policy. Today ALCIMED works with major industrial groups, ETIs and SMEs, investment funds and institutional players. ALCIMED relies on a team of 180 highly-skilled individuals to help its clients in the exploration and development of their uncharted territories: New Technologies, Market Innovation, High-Growth Geographies, and Strategic Foresight. ALCIMED is headquartered in Paris and has offices in Lyon and Toulouse in France, as well as in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, the United-States and Singapore.

Alcimed is a member of CroissancePlus and the ACI (Association des Conseils en Innovation).

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