Nudging Nutrition Into Action
Unravelling Food Labelling Potential

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Objectives

• Position Health Canada’s proposed front-of-package (FOP) labelling initiative in the context of nudging interventions to make healthy food choices easier

• Outline factors that need to be considered to enhance consumer access, understanding, appraisal and use of the FOP symbols
1. Context – Healthy Eating Strategy

2. Making healthier food choices: challenges and opportunities

3. Food labels as a tool for nudging consumer choice

4. Considerations for FOP nutrition labelling: insights from Health Canada’s focus groups
1. Context
Canada’s Healthy Eating Challenges

• Many Canadians do not follow a healthy eating pattern as part of a healthy lifestyle

• Poor diet is the primary risk factor for obesity and many chronic diseases, which place a significant burden on the health of Canadians and the health care system

• Despite progress achieved through several initiatives, the food environment makes it very difficult for Canadians to make healthy choices:
  – Widespread availability of inexpensive foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sodium and sugars
  – Canadians face challenges in understanding and using nutrition information
  – Marketing of foods is very powerful and children are particularly vulnerable
  – There is a constant flow of changing and often conflicting messages
  – Some subpopulations in Canada face challenges in accessing nutritious foods
HEALTHY eating Strategy

VISION: Make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Canadians

Labelling and Claims
- Update Nutrition Facts table
- Introduce front-of-pack labelling of sugars, sodium and saturated fat

Nutrition Quality Standards
- Eliminate industrial trans fat
- Reduce sodium

Access to and Availability of Nutritious Foods
- Improve the Nutrition North Canada program

Protections for Vulnerable Populations
- Restrict marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children

Healthy Eating Information
- Revise Canada’s Food Guide
- SSB Reduction Campaign

Regulations, Guidance, Education.

Strong Evidence-base.

Strategic Partnerships.

Engaging Canadians and Stakeholders.

Openness and Transparency.
2. Making Healthier Food Choices:

Challenges and Opportunities
Do food choices always reveal underlying preferences?

The answer is....NO
Choices emerge as an interplay...

...between intuitive and rational processes
Healthy food choices are hard...

- Choosing between immediate gratification and uncertain future outcomes requires effort and motivation
- Tendency to overemphasize immediate costs/benefits and undervalue future ones
- Self control is limited, especially when hungry and rushed
- Food decisions are often habitual and automatic

...particularly in the current food environment
A framework for behaviour change...

Possibilities

What choices are offered?

Process

How are choices made?

Persuasion

How are choices communicated?
- Vividness
- Comparisons
- Moments of truth

Person

How are intentions reinforced?

Chance et al., Cust. Need. and Solut. (2014)

...uses nudges in 4 domains of intervention
3. Food labels as a tool...

...to nudge consumer choice
Recent labelling changes... give new and useful information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
<th>Valeur nutritive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per 1 cup (37 g)</td>
<td>pour 1 tasse (37 g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories</strong> 140</td>
<td>% Valeur quotidienne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Daily Value</strong></td>
<td>% valeur quotidienne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat / Lipides 2 g</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated / saturés 0.4 g</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Trans / trans 0 g</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate / Glucides 29 g</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre / Fibres 3 g</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars / Sucres 15 g</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein / Protéines 3 g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium 204 mg</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium 0 mg</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium 169 mg</td>
<td>13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron / Fer 7 mg</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*5% or less is a little / 5% ou moins c’est peu
15% or more is a lot / 15% ou plus c’est beaucoup

**Ingredients:** Sugars (fancy molasses, brown sugar, sugar) • Wheat flour • Vegetable oil shortening (soybean and/or canola oil and modified palm oil) • Liquid whole egg • Salt • Sodium bicarbonate • Spices • Allura Red

**Contains:** Wheat • Egg • Soy

**Ingrédients:** Sucres (mélasses qualité fantaisie, cassonade, sucre) • Farine de blé • Shortening d’huile végétale (huile de soja et/ou huile de canola et huile de palme modifiée) • Oeufs entiers liquides • Sel • Bicarbonate de sodium • Épices • Rouge allura

**Contient:** Blé • Oeufs • Soya
But current nutrition labelling has limitations...

Nutrient Content & Health Claims

- Highlights only positive attributes of a food
- Voluntary
- Used as marketing tool

...in the way it supports healthier choices

Nutrition Facts table

- Location limits visibility
- Complexity makes it difficult for some consumers to understand
- Amount of detail can overwhelm some consumers
Interpretive FOP nutrition labelling...

- Nutrient-Specific Systems
  - Chile
  - Israel
  - Ecuador
  - UK

- Summary Graded Systems
  - Australia / NZ
  - Loblaw
  - Metro
  - France

- Summary Binary Systems
  - Nordic Countries
  - Choices International
  - Walmart
  - New Zealand

...can nudge consumer choice
Health Canada’s proposed FOP Approach

- Mandatory
- Symbol-based
- Visible when a food is “high in” key nutrients that contribute to negative health outcomes
- Built on existing nutrition labelling
Nudging Nutrition Into Action

To encourage availability of foods with lower levels of key nutrients of concern
To provide quick and easy guidance about nutrients to limit
To encourage availability of foods with lower levels of key nutrients of concern
To nudge consumer food choices and dietary patterns for overall nutritional health and well-being

Labelling Tactics

Innovation / Reformulation

Dietary Guidance

Consumer Competencies

Notice FOP label
Knowledge Competence Motivation
Appraise FOP label
Apply/Use FOP label
Understand FOP label

To provide quick and easy guidance about nutrients to limit

Decision Determinants
- Personal
- Social
- Environmental

Individual Population
4. Considerations for FOP labelling

Insights from Health Canada’s Focus Groups
Objective of the research

- Explore consumer access, understanding, appraisal and use of four different FOP symbols to inform regulatory proposal development
## Participants profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
<th>Adequate Health Literacy</th>
<th>Marginal Health Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADULTS (n=108)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=53)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=55)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34 (n=32)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54 (n=42)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;55 (n=34)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or less (n=18)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some post-secondary/technical training (n=35)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary graduate (n=55)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOUTH (age = 14-17 ; n=17)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=9)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=8)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consumer tasks

Task 1

Task 2

Task 3
Task 1 key findings

• In each of the 3 food categories, the product with the fewest ‘high in’ nutrients was selected as the healthier choice by the largest number of participants.

• For any given food category, about half of the participants noticed the ‘high in’ FOP symbols, and some of those reported using the symbol to make their decision.

• Health literacy moderated the use of the ‘high in’ FOP symbol:
  – Symbol triggered participants with adequate health literacy to go to the Nutrition Facts table to seek more information
  – Symbol was sufficient to choose a different product among participants with marginal health literacy
Insights from task 1

Consumer factors

• Lack of familiarity / education
• Existing labelling beliefs (credibility, marketing, trust)
• Presence of health conditions
• Habits / nutrition knowledge

Labelling factors

• Other heuristic cues (name, claims, package colour)
• Symbol Colour / Contrast
• Placement
Task 2 key findings

• ‘Picture’ and ‘Exclamation’ symbols most selected; ‘Triangle’ symbol least selected

• Size of the symbol depended on which design was picked:
  – smaller size for ‘Octagon’ and ‘Picture’
  – Larger size for ‘exclamation’

• Consistent location of the symbol on the package is more important than absolute location
Tasks 2 and 3 findings

Separate symbols for nutrients
Use of icons for nutrients
“High In” text

“High In” text
Octagon + ! = “pay attention”

Separate symbols for nutrients
Octagon = “stop”
Arrow up is ambiguous

Marketing logo
Did not convey “high in” meaning
Participants support initiative stating:

**FOP Labelling could improve label use:**
- Important elements include: symbols that are attention-grabbing and easy to find on a consistent location; credibility; and public education
- FOP would encourage people to learn to pay more attention to sodium, saturated fat and sugars in their diet.
- It would be helpful for people who tend not to look at the NFt.

**FOP could change eating habits:**
- It could affect how you eat at home – i.e. if you have a food with “High In” nutrients, you might be more likely to be careful about how much of it you consume when you see the symbol on the package.

**It could change the marketplace:**
- It could motivate manufacturers to offer healthier foods so that they do not have to put this symbol on their products.
Implications for the food industry

• Consumers are demanding healthier products, taking more responsibility for the food they eat, expressing their opinions and driving change.

• The proposed approach would help stimulate innovation and growth where needed most – reformulation where possible and development of new products below thresholds.

• This is an opportunity for the Canadian food industry to position itself as a world leader in tackling the problems of obesity and chronic diseases through innovation.
Objectives and desired outcomes

‘High in’ FOP labelling

- Steer industry innovation
- Heuristic cues to consumers
- Reinforce other healthy eating initiatives

Healthier choices are easier for consumers to make

Population intake of critical nutrients is reduced

Improves public health by reducing important risk factors for key chronic diseases

In concert with other initiatives under the Healthy Eating Strategy
The food environment and cognitive processes make healthy food choices hard.

FOP labelling is a promising intervention that can make healthier food choices easier by nudging both consumers and manufacturers in a mutually reinforcing way.

Factors, including health literacy, that moderate access, understanding, appraisal and use of nutrition information should be duly considered in the development of FOP labelling approach.
Thank You!