

HLSG 6 - Update on the fruit and vegetable work stream

Fruit and vegetable pledge

A pledge to promote consumption of fruit and vegetables has been developed following discussions with industry representatives and members of the HLSG. This takes into account the outcome of wider Government initiatives such as the Defra Fruit and Vegetable Task Force (which includes promoting healthy frozen and canned fruit and vegetables, and inclusion of composite foods in the 5 A DAY scheme) and Change4Life (which incorporates 5 A DAY messaging, and encourages partners to include messaging in its own communications).

The draft overarching pledge **‘We will do more to create a positive environment which enables and encourages people to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables’** will be delivered through a menu of options reflecting the diversity of the different sectors and the range of products that can contribute to this initiative. The menu of options outlines what action businesses might take, and there will be a requirement for these activities to be monitored and information provided to DH annually via a monitoring template. The draft pledge and menu of options, including examples of possible activity, which will underpin it is presented at Annex A.

A draft-monitoring template has been prepared and we are consulting stakeholders before finalising this.

Composite foods and licensed 5 A DAY logo

Following a recommendation from the Defra Fruit and Vegetable Task Force, DH has been considering criteria for extending the 5 A DAY logo scheme to include composite foods e.g. lasagne and coleslaw. This includes, for example, the minimum portion size of fruit and vegetables that would be required for the logo to be used, and the cut offs for nutrients (saturated fat, sugar and salt) above which the logo could not be applied. The reformulation of foods to contain increased levels of fruit and vegetables is potentially one action that businesses may wish to pursue as its contribution to the pledge.

The Department convened an external reference group from industry and NGOs to advise on possible criteria. The advice and membership of the group is provided in Annex B. HLSG will receive an update at the HLSG meeting on Departmental considerations on extending the 5 A DAY logo scheme to include composite foods.

In developing the pledge we have engaged with a number of different stakeholders and a summary of their views is provided at Annex C.

Action required

HLSG is invited to:

- Confirm they are content with the wording of the collective pledge;

Following the update HLSG is invited to:

- discuss the criteria for the extension of the 5 A DAY Logo; and
- discuss the implications for the delivery of the RD Pledge.

Annex A - Draft Responsibility Deal Food Network – Fruit and Vegetables

We will do more to create a positive environment which enables and encourages people to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables

Delivered through a menu of options selected and reported by industry reflecting the diversity of the food manufacturing, retailing, and catering sectors and the range of products that contribute towards assisting consumers in achieving Government recommendations for fruit and vegetables. This includes fresh, frozen, canned, dried and juiced products.

This could include activity in 3 areas:

Making fruit and vegetables more accessible

- Action to make fruit and vegetables more affordable e.g. promotions, value ranges, pricing
- Promoting fruit and vegetables, including that in the frozen aisle, more prominently
- Placement of fruit and vegetables to support impulse purchases
- Ensuring products are available to support the Healthy Start scheme
- Ensuring availability of fruit and vegetables in the workplace - in canteens, meetings, vending machines including, for example, serving extra portions as part of the meal
- Ensuring availability of fruit and vegetables in convenience stores
- Including fruit and vegetable choices on menus

Making it easier for consumers to achieve their 5 a day target

- Reformulating products and recipe development to increase the content of fruit and vegetables, e.g. ready meals; sharing/mentoring with smaller companies,
- Choosing to stock products with greater fruit and vegetable content
- Illustrating serving suggestions, which include fruit or vegetables
- Ensuring meals served out of the home contain/include fruit and vegetables in meaningful quantities
- Ensuring a range of “ready to cook” and pre-prepared vegetables available in retail settings
- Developing new fruit and vegetable based products and recipes
- Ensuring availability of products that meets the needs of Government Buying Standards

Encouraging people to increase fruit and vegetables intake through incentives and information

- Promoting the 5 a day message on pack, including composite foods
- Developing targeted and personalised advice on increasing fruit and vegetables consumption (e.g. using websites, till receipts, customer mailings)
- Providing advice on how to cook fruit and vegetables, and incorporate them into meals
- Promoting the 5 a day message in store and in communications, for example, any reformulated products, including any linked to Change4Life retail guidance
- Sharing and promoting best practice for whole category marketing campaigns

Reporting and Monitoring

We will contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of progress against the pledges.

Annex B - Recommendations for the inclusion of composite foods in the 5 A DAY logo and licensing scheme

Background

Following the recommendation from Defra's Fruit and Vegetable Task Force "that "healthy" fruit and vegetable containing composite foods are considered for inclusion in the 5ADAY licensing scheme", the Department established an External Reference Group to provide advice on possible criteria. The membership of the group was:



To enable the group in their considerations, they agreed a definition of a composite product for 5 A DAY.

A food or drink comprising of two or more ingredients¹, at least one of which is a fruit and/or vegetable².

Recommendations

The group have considered a number of issues relating to the inclusion of composite foods in the 5 A DAY Logo and Licensing scheme. Agreement was reached for most of the recommendations, however for some, a majority decision has been taken. Where this is the case, issues of concern are identified. The recommendations are outlined below.

1. Specified nutrient criteria

Recommendation:

Products applying to be included in the scheme will be subject to meeting specified nutrient criteria related to saturated fat, added sugars and salt.

Commentary

The group was unable to reach agreement on the specific detail of nutrient criteria for use of the 5 A DAY logo scheme including composite foods.

¹ This does not include additives or water.

² Potatoes do not count towards 5 A DAY. 100% fruit and/or vegetable juices, pulps and purees are included

Some members of the group expressed interest in the IGD approach to defining criteria for this purpose (% GDA and a modified definition for added sugars), while others preferred the traffic light criteria. In order for the detail of the criteria to be agreed, the group recommended that further work would be required to determine the most appropriate approach.

2. Variety

Recommendation:

In expanding the scheme, the ethos of including a variety of fruit and vegetables in the diet should be maintained.

Commentary

Variety is a key aspect to the ethos of 5 A DAY and healthy eating guidelines. The more types of fruit and vegetables included in the diet the better, as different fruit and vegetables contain different nutrients.

The issue of including variety becomes even more important with the inclusion of composite foods and the suggested removal of a maximum portion size.

3. Minimum portion size

Recommendation:

The minimum portion size for food and drinks should be ½ a portion.

Commentary:

The majority of the group supported starting with a minimum of ½ a portion to encourage low fruit and vegetable consumers to increase their consumption by recognising the contribution that may already be within their diet. Further ½ portions may then be more attainable and thus, reaching 5 A DAY more achievable.

This reduction could also encourage reformulation where the target of ½ a portion is more achievable, or realistic, than reaching 1 portion. It is acknowledged that this minimum starting point may be more relevant to some products than others.

Some members of the group supported the minimum portion size remaining at 1. Their concerns included, the evidence base to support this amendment, consumer understanding (whether the 5 A DAY message would be confused by being achievable with 10 x 1/2 portions A DAY), the range of product categories this would apply to, and whether this approach would encourage reformulation or act as a disincentive.

Some members of the group expressed concerns related to minimum portion size of fruit and vegetables for all drinks on consumer messaging and understanding, particularly with the maximum portion for 100% juice being capped at 1.

4. Portion increments

Recommendation:

Portions should increase in ½ portions from the minimum portion starting point.

Commentary

The majority of the group agreed that increasing by ½ portions would further promote the ease of consuming (at least) 5 A DAY and is consistent with promoting the importance of variety.

Some members of the group supported portion increase remaining at 1. Their concerns were centred on consumer understanding of portions contained, including when comparing products. Two organisations felt that before adopting a ½ portion increment research should be undertaken to understand whether this approach would be an incentive or disincentive to consumers.

5. Maximum portion

Recommendation:

The upper maximum for the number of portions of fruit and/or vegetables in a product should be left open. The ethos of including a variety of fruit and vegetables would need to be maintained. 100% fruit juice, dried fruit, beans and pulses, concentrated/single strength purees would only count once in the product regardless of the amount present.

Commentary

Removing the upper maximum number of portions of fruit and/or vegetables that can be claimed in a product recognises the potential to nudge manufacturers, retailers and caterers to include more fruit and vegetables in their products.

Through marketing, the ethos of including a variety of fruit and vegetables in the diet would need to be reinforced to prevent foods with, for example, all 5 portions in one serving of the food being seen as a 'dose' solution. In addition, advice would remain that 100% juice, dried fruit, beans and pulses and concentrated/single strength purees can provide only 1 portion, regardless of the maximum level and the quantity contained or consumed.

6. Maximum portion size for 100% juice

Recommendation:

100% juice should only count as a maximum of 1 portion (assumed to be 150ml).

Commentary

Because of the non-milk extrinsic sugars (NMES) and the reduced fibre content 100% fruit or vegetable juice would be capped at a maximum of 1 portion. Although juice contains NMES, the additional nutrient contribution compared to some other drink options is recognised in this approach.

7. Maximum portion sizes for smoothies

Recommendation:

The maximum portion size for fruit and/or vegetable based smoothies should be left open, as long as the claimed portions can be consumed within a single serving.

Commentary

Provided fruit and/or vegetable based smoothies have a variety of fruit and/or vegetables and restrictions for juice and puree are adhered to, the maximum portions that can be claimed should have no upper limit. Smoothies that claim more than 2 portions would need to be in a volume that is likely to be consumed at one serving by an individual.

Smoothies that are considered a 'composite drink', for example a yogurt based smoothie, would need to meet specified nutrient criteria.

Through marketing, the ethos of including a variety of fruit and vegetables and the importance of consuming a varied diet would need to be reinforced to prevent consumers achieving all 5 portions through smoothies alone.

In addition, 100% juice, and concentrated/single strength purees can provide only 1 portion, regardless of the maximum level and the quantity contained or consumed.

A member of the group raised concerns that there were no limits on the number of portions a smoothie could contain due to dental health issues and concerns about the fibre content.

8. Mixed portions

Recommendation:

A portion may contain a combination of different fruits and/or vegetables.

Commentary

To embrace variety, a portion can contain a mix of different fruits and/or vegetables. In order for a product to contain more than 1 portion, it must contain different fruit and/or vegetables regardless of their form.

9. Composite drinks

Recommendation:

Composite drinks are subject to meeting specified nutrient criteria.

Commentary

Composite drinks are subject to meeting the specified nutrient criteria in the same manner as composite foods.

10. 100% juices, smoothies, tinned fruit in natural juice, tinned vegetables in water, and plain frozen vegetables or fruit

Recommendation:

100% juices, fruit and/or vegetable based smoothies, tinned fruit in natural juice, tinned vegetables in water, and plain frozen vegetables or fruit will not need to meet specified nutrient criteria.

Commentary

To ensure that products that are 100% fruits and/or vegetables are not eliminated from the scheme based on their sugar content, it is recommended that these products are exempt from meeting specified nutrient criteria. The rationale being that fruit juice although containing NMES has other additional nutrients.

Smoothies that are considered a 'composite drink', for example a yogurt based smoothie, would need to meet specified nutrient criteria.

11. Children's products

Recommendation:

Products aimed at children should be treated in the same manner as those aimed at adults.

Commentary

Until there is a legal definition of what constitutes a children's food, or there is epidemiological evidence to support the determination of children's portion sizes for fruit and vegetables, it was agreed that children's products can only be included in the scheme if they contain the minimum adult portion of fruit and/or vegetables. It is noted that the IGD have agreed, across its membership, a pragmatic fruit and vegetable portion size value for fruit and vegetables for children.

The group advised that the Department should revisit this decision should relevant and robust evidence to support the development of children's fruit and vegetable portion sizes, and/or a legal definition of what constitutes a children's food, becomes available.

12. Artificial sweeteners

Recommendation:

The addition of artificial sweeteners to products would not exclude products

from applying to the 5 A DAY logo and licensing scheme

Commentary

Health promotion messages promote sugar substitutes as a way of encouraging consumers to reduce sugar consumption. Therefore, composite products with artificial sweeteners would not be excluded from the scheme, as long as the product contained the minimum portion of fruit and vegetables per serving and met the specified nutrient criteria.

13. Fruit or vegetable powders, extracts or flavourings

Recommendation:

It is recommended that fruit or vegetable powders, extracts or flavourings used in any product (be it in soups, sauces, drinks etc) do not contribute to the fruit and vegetable portion for products applying to the 5 A DAY logo and licensing scheme.

Commentary

For the purpose of the 5 A DAY logo and licensing scheme, there appears to be no justification for including fruit and vegetable powders, extracts and/or flavourings that have little resemblance to fruit and vegetables. This would be consistent with the ethos of 5 A DAY in relation to consumer perception that any product labelled with the 5 A DAY logo should be recognisable as a fruit or vegetable. It is acknowledged that this recommendation is based on a lack of nutrient information for fruit or vegetable powders, extracts or flavourings.

Composite products with these ingredients would not be excluded from the scheme, as long as the product contained the minimum portion of fruit and vegetables per serving and met the specified nutrient criteria

The group advised that the Department should revisit this decision should any technical information become available.

Annex C - Overview of stakeholder views on the draft fruit and veg pledge

Department officials have held initial conversations across industry sectors to raise awareness of the draft pledge, and to discuss the varying opportunities relevant to each business.

Industry has largely been supportive on the nature of the pledge, appreciating the need to do more to encourage consumers to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables, and recognising the opportunity they have to do so.

The provision of a menu of options for pledge activity has been welcomed. This flexible approach enables industry to demonstrate progress on a number of fronts, insofar as they contribute to increasing fruit and vegetable intake, such as reformulation or changing the balance of promotions. This allows contributions to be made from across the food sector, with clear roles for retailers, caterers, and manufacturers.

Industry colleagues are awaiting confirmation of the Departments criteria for the expansion of the 5 A DAY scheme to include composite foods, as this will influence their commitment to sign up to the pledge.