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## THE NUTRITIONAL QUALITY OF FOODS AND HEALTH-RELATED CLAIMS IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Nutrition and health claims are shown to influence food choices made by consumers. This research examined the scope and essence of nutrition and health claims on India's front-of-pack of packaged' good' and' less-healthy' products. A health claim is a suggestion about a food being consumed as part of a healthy diet, and what it can do for your health. Products with health claims will help decrease the risk of certain diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis. When used as part of an overall safe and well-balanced diet, choosing products with health claims will help you lower your risk of these diseases.*



*In total, it included 7526 products, with 47 percent (n 3557) being classified as' healthy.' More than one-third of the items had at least one claim for nutrition and 15% had at least one claim for wellbeing on the front of the box. Claims have been found on one-third of' less-healthy' products; 26 per cent of those products have claims for nutrition and 7 per cent have claims for health. Around 45 percent of' clean' items showed claims for nutrition and 23 percent had claims for fitness. The majority (69 per cent) of 7058 individual claims were made on' safe' goods. Cereals had the highest proportion of nutrition and health claims (1503 claims on 564 products), one-third of which were shown on' less healthy' cereals. claims could be misleading consumers' perceptions of nutritional quality of foods.*

**KEYWORDS:** Nutrition, Foods, Health, Claims.

### INTRODUCTION

Food quality is an essential nutrition that generates necessity as buyers of nutrition are defenseless to any type of contamination that may occur during the process of production. In addition, many buyers rely on assembling and preparing steps, in particular to know what fixations are available because of nutritional, nutritious necessities (real, vegetarian) or medicinal conditions (e.g., diabetes or allergies).

Because of the effect on the body as it relates to cholesterol, meat, salt and sugar intake, it is essential to understand the nutritional value of the food. The food label is a method for clients to ensure the nutritional value of a product.

Health-related claims could help consumers identify healthier foods by providing consumers with useful information on healthier choices. On the other hand, research has suggested that health-related statements may be of marginal benefit or may even hamper consumers in their decision-making for a variety of reasons like neglecting other, more valuable sources of information. Nevertheless, little is known about the effects of claims, particularly in real-life shopping situations, on consumer comprehension, purchasing and consuming food.

On 18 January 2013, a new Standard to control claims for nutritional content and health claims on food labels and in advertising became law. Food businesses had to comply with the new Standard until 18 January 2016 (Standard 1.2.7-Nutrition, health and associated claims).

Noting that the guidelines are "not intended to encourage widespread nutrient fortification of foods but rather to provide a specific set of guidelines to be followed when foods are nutritionally improved by the introduction of distinct nutrients (vitamins, minerals or proteins);"

- Endors efforts and publication of Nutritional Quality of Foods by the Food and Drug Administration; adding nutrients; and
- Urges producers to support and encourage them to follow these guidelines when deciding to add nutrients to a food produced or processed; and
- Recommends that health care institutions (hospitals, day care centres, etc.) require producers to follow these guidelines as part of contracts for food procurement; and
- Recommends that educators in public health use the principles set out in these guidelines when developing instructional materials relating to food nutrition and nutrient fortification.

Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 established the Union rules on claims relating to nutrition and health. On 1 July 2007, the Regulation commenced to apply.

This regulation is the legal framework used by food business operators to highlight the specific beneficial effects of their products, in terms of health and nutrition, on the product label or in their advertisements.

The Regulation's rules apply to claims of diet (such as "low fat," "high fiber") and claims of safety (such as "Vitamin D is required for normal bone growth and development in children").

The goal of those rules is to ensure that any claims made in the European Union on the labeling, marketing or advertisement of a product are valid, reliable and based on scientific evidence.

Food bearing claims that could mislead consumers are prohibited on the EU market.

Not only does this protect consumers, but it also fosters creativity and encourages fair competition. The regulations provide for the free exchange of claims for food carrying, as any food company can use the same claims on its goods anywhere in the European Union.

There are different procedures managed by the Commission for the various types of claims, with regard to their authorisation.

A public EU Nutrition and Health Claims Database lists all registered food claims and all approved and unauthorized health claims as a reference source and ensures full transparency for customers and food business operators

Our goal was to establish a globally applicable tool (Nutrition Score) for evaluating and enhancing the nutritional quality of individual foods and beverages. The nutrient option for the Nutrition Score is consistent with the scientific consensus on nutrients with adverse health effects currently available. The process by which acceptable levels are calculated was based on (inter)national, generally accepted dietary recommendations. To boost the nutritional quality, we applied the approach on Unilever's entire global food and beverage portfolio. We assume the approach can be extended to any portfolio of products which will help food producers grow healthier alternatives. This could have a significant impact on the nutritional quality of the overall diet.

Diet plays an important role in most of the chronic diseases in the developed world that are the major causes of morbidity and mortality. In a "reductionist" approach, scientists have focussed their research on the role of individual nutrients in maintaining health. This approach, and in particular the discovery of essential nutrients and their roles in disease prevention, has been instrumental in the elimination of deficiency diseases in large parts of the world. However, nutrients are not consumed in isolation, but as components of whole foods and in an infinite number of combinations. Foods, however, contain a multitude of chemicals, which either have no role in human metabolism or have not yet been elucidated for the purpose. There is a widespread belief among organic lifestyle proponents that natural, low-input production systems result in nutritionally higher quality foods. While it has been shown in a large

number of observational studies that the nutrient content of organic foods can be changed by conditions of production, there is little evidence to show that these modifications can result in observable health benefits, most notably in humans. Current data are mostly confounded by inadequate experimental design; in particular, there is a lack of research using single varieties of foods grown in similar locations under tightly controlled conditions, and sufficiently sensitive evaluation methods to detect the effect of any diet that is still nutritionally adequate on human health.

### **NUTRITION AND HEALTH CLAIMS**

Claims are used to portray items as having an additional nutritional or health value. Consumers mostly perceive products that carry certain claims as being better for their health and well-being. A food high in fat, salt and/or sugar can still use arguments such as "rich in vitamin C" or "high in fiber" at the moment, however, even if the overall health and nutritional benefits of the product are low.

The Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation, by regulating nutrition and health claims, aims to protect consumers from being misled. This will be done for health claims by creating a positive list of claims, which will be created in three phases. Member States will first submit a list of valid claims based on generally accepted science in their country (by January 2008). The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) must review all claims submitted in two years' time. Finally, the accepted list of Health Claims will be in the public register. A file with the supporting evidence must be sent to EFSA for new health claims by the organization wishing to make the claim on a food or drink and the approval process followed. For disease risk factor reduction claims and claims on children's health, more elaborate procedures have been foreseen.

To facilitate the application of this measure, a derogation (exemption) has been agreed that will allow claims to be made on nutrition if only one nutrient is higher than the required profile. The high level of this nutrient must however be clearly marked on the label, close and with the same prominence as the name. Any nutritional argument may be made if two or more of the nutrients exceed the limit.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This observational, cross-sectional descriptive study examined variables such as the quality of fats and carbohydrates, the pattern of food consumption and the nutritional quality of the universities' most consumed foods. A criterion for inclusion in the study was the regular attendance to classes. The survey and the consent form were sent by email to all students at the sixth, seventh and eighth levels (N=208), between the ages of 19 and 22; 65 of them signed the consent form, 63 completed the survey, but the study only takes into account the surveys completed. And then chosen for the creation of this study (n=43), it seems like a non-probabilistic sampling of convenience. Those which contain errors were discarded.

A food list was designed for data collection by analyzing the food provided in the different cafeterias, and in some cases the foods on the menus served at the place were considered. The survey on food frequency used in this research has been adapted from a Colombian instrument. The adapted instrument consisted of 139 foods sold in cafeterias, grouped as follows: 12 types of snacks, 7 types of chocolate, 9 types of cookies, 8 flavors of ice cream, 9 sugar drinks, 8 hot drinks, 4 drinks of milk and 82 products processed.

### **RESULT:**

The entire portfolio of Unilever global foods and beverages has been evaluated, and actions have been taken to improve the quality of nutrition. The benefits of this approach over other nutritional quality assurance programs in foods are that it is based on the latest scientific nutritional findings and its global applicability.

### **DISCUSSION:**

There are a few researches carried out at university canteens on the quality of food eaten by the students. In this study, it was found that several risk factors for non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs)

that originate from the food preferences of the students during their university period were posed by the focus group. The food which was most consumed was "chochos con tostado." Students, however, consume other high-carbohydrate, fat and sugar foods that have been eaten in higher amounts than recommended, that cause NCDs.

Similar investigations have been conducted in Chile, showing that 58.6 per cent of students consumed junk food due to inadequate breakfast intake, skipping certain meal times and consuming poor-quality food prepared in university canteens, representing a risk factor for NCDs.

### CONCLUSION:

The Nutrition Score is the first simple, transparent and straightforward method for assessing nutritional composition, which can be applied globally and across all food and beverage categories. The Nutrition Score will, moreover, be a starting point for a powerful front-of-pack health indicator. This can have a significant positive impact on public health, in particular when all food manufacturers adopt it.

Nowadays more food labels contain information on nutrition and health which gives us useful knowledge about the food we buy. It can help us understand how different foods contribute to our health and well-being and choose a more balanced diet.

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