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France – PNNS guidelines from DGCCRF



Full title: Guidelines for the attention of economic operators in relation to communication of the food consumption and physical activity benchmarks of the National Nutrition and Health Programme – November 2008

http://www.economie.gouv.fr/files/directions_services/dgccrf/consommation/information_consommateurs/nutrition/lignes_directrices_nutition_sante.pdf

Introduction These guidelines serve as a point of reference when one or more benchmarks for food consumption and physical activity of the National Nutrition and Health Programme (NNHP) are cited or referred to in communications intended to promote a product. They explain the principles that the professionals can use as a basis for ensuring the consistency of their communication with the public health objectives of the NNHP.

By means of the terms of reference attached as an appendix, the NNHP's Pilot Committee assigned the task of considering these guidelines and principles to an ad hoc working group combining the contributions of different actors: the Association of French Language Dieticians, Inpes, Inca, administrations, professional organisations and user and consumer associations. The administrations monitored the work led by the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs & Repression of Fraud (DGCCRF).

This initiative is part of the self-disciplinary process concerning the voluntary communications, particularly at national level, of the economic operators. In general terms, sectoral best practice guides on communication, translating the guidelines in the present document, must be encouraged.

Chapter 1**1. THE PUBLIC HEALTH BENCHMARKS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NNHP**

The NNHP's objective is to improve the health of the population by acting on the nutritional determinant. This overall goal is divided into nine priority objectives and ten specific objectives.

Within the framework of such a public health policy, it is necessary to take account of the global nature of food and to provide the population with points of reference concerning consumption and physical activity to guide them in their food choices. These benchmarks (listed in Appendix 2) were developed by the French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA). They are intended to enable the public health objectives set by the NNHP to be achieved. Their communication by all the actors working in the field of nutrition will provide a certain consistency in the plethora of advice and recommendations imparted to the general public.

The communication of NNHP messages is based on several principles:

- Food is a major cultural issue and evokes, particularly in France, notions of pleasure, conviviality and taste.
- Any stigmatisation of individuals, behaviour or food products is forbidden and there will be no embargo relating to food.

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- It is the food that should be the focus of attention, not the nutrients, as well as regular physical activity;

However, these points of reference are not in any way to be taken as consumption standards to be achieved on a daily basis. Within the context of the diversity of food, they are guidelines for the consumption of different types of food, taking account of the needs, tastes, lifestyles and culture of each individual.

Chapter 2

2. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMUNICATION CONCERNING NNHP BENCHMARKS

- When the NNHP's consumption benchmarks are mentioned or referred to in communications, they must be presented in a positive light and with the intention of enhancing the ability of the population to achieve them in accordance with the context of their lives.

- When the communication refers to the NNHP benchmarks, it must not allow any interpretation other than that of this recommendation.

For example: Do not encourage the consumption of fruit rather than vegetables based on a recommendation to eat both fruit *and* vegetables.

- When the communication refers to a benchmark, the composition of the product and its communication must remain within the spirit of the NNHP and must not be inconsistent with other NNHP benchmarks.

- The communication must not encourage the exaggerated or excessive consumption of a given food, regardless of category. Phrases such as "eat as much as you want" must not be used.

The communication must not be based on or promote impulsive eating, such as snacking without feeling hungry.

- A communication that refers to the nutritional benefits of an ingredient (fruits, vegetables, milk, whole grain cereals, etc.) must be based on a significant quantity of that ingredient in the food concerned.

The graphical representation of this ingredient on the labelling or in the advertising of a food product must be in proportion to the quantity actually contained in the food.

- When an NNHP benchmark is highlighted, the consumer must be informed in a balanced and objective manner about the food categories to which the food product containing the ingredient in question belongs.

- The benchmark relating to physical activity can be used to represent active individuals, but it must not be used as a pretext in a communication about a food product to encourage its excessive consumption. The increased energy output related to the physical exercise must be clearly and unambiguously presented and must be in proportion to the actual intensity of the exercise concerned.

Chapter 3

3. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THE "FRUITS AND VEGETABLES" CONSUMPTION BENCHMARK.

Due to the developments in communications about this benchmark, specific recommendations have been established.

Fruits AND vegetables in all their forms (raw, cooked, natural or prepared, fresh, frozen or in preserves) are included in this benchmark; however, dry, dried and oleaginous fruits have not been considered.

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The vegetables category contains non-starch vegetables or edible plants other than those containing starch.

The following are excluded from the NNHP benchmark for fruits and vegetables:

- Cereal-based foods
- Potatoes
- Dry vegetables and legumes that are starchy foods
- (Peas are vegetables).

With low energy density and high nutritional density, fruits and vegetables make an effective contribution to satiety.

Communication on the notion of a contribution towards achieving the NNHP benchmark for the consumption of fruits and vegetables is possible with regard to the recommendations set out below.

- When a consumption unit or portion of a product recommended by a professional is presented as helping to achieve the NNHP benchmark for the consumption of fruits and vegetables, the operator must be able to justify this from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. These criteria must relate to the consumption unit or portion recommended by the professional.

- When the notion of nutritional equivalence is used, it must be based on pertinent and validated scientific evidence.

- For communications concerning this benchmark, a portion or consumption unit of the ready-to-eat product must contain, at the very least, a significant quantity of vegetables and/or fruits (at least 80g in the portion or consumption unit of the ready-to-eat product).

- For fruit juices and drinks containing at least 80g of fruit and/or vegetables, it is recommended that the communication on a portion of the product should be presented as achieving just one of the "5 fruits and vegetables" recommended per day. The communication must not imply that the fruit and/or vegetable juices can contribute to more than one of the "5 fruits and vegetables" in total.

- To encourage the consumption of a variety of fruits & vegetables: the communication on a product must not, under any circumstance, imply that this product alone is sufficient to achieve the entire benchmark for fruit and vegetables. In other words, the communication must not state or suggest that eating 5 portions of the same product will enable the "5 fruits and vegetables" benchmark to be achieved.

The communication must take care not to cause confusion between the number of fruits and vegetables used in a recipe and the recipe's contribution to the consumption benchmark.

Chapter 4

4. REVIEW OF REGULATORY PROVISIONS

In addition to these guidelines, the following general provisions are applicable.

- Communication from economic operators concerning the benchmarks for food consumption and physical activity are subject to the provisions of the Consumer Code relating, in particular, to mis-selling (articles L.213.1 and L.213.2) and advertising likely to mislead the consumer (articles L. 121.1 to L.121. 7). In other words, any claim must be justifiable.

- References to the ingredients must comply with the regulatory provisions in force, especially with regard to labelling and in particular to a declaration of the quantity of the

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ingredients (as stipulated in article R 112-17 of the Consumer Code). Professional recommendations are encouraged to determine the significant thresholds for highlighting ingredients.

- References to nutrients are subject to the regulatory provisions in force concerning nutrition and health claims (regulation 1924/2006): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02006R1924-20121129&from=EN>

E.g.: Oranges are a source of vitamin C.

- The same applies to any reference to health relating to the consumption of a foodstuff or one of its components.

E.g.: "Eating 5 fruits and vegetables is good for one's health" falls within the scope of regulation No.1924/2006 concerning nutrition and health claims.

- As the working group's mandate is to determine a framework to ensure the consistency of the communications with the NNHP benchmarks, those provisions relating to health messages as described in article L. 2133-1 of the Public Health Code (created by Law no. 2004-806 of 9 August 2004) are not included in the group's reflections.

APPENDIX 1

Consistency of commercial communication with NNHP consumption benchmarks.

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The consistency of communication concerning the consumption benchmarks to the population by the various sources of the communication is one of the bases of the National Nutrition and Health Programme (NNHP).

The NNHP Pilot Committee decided to create a working group to determine a framework for the economic operators, to enable them to ensure that their communication is consistent with the benchmarks.

This group is responsible for developing an advisory document on the guidelines promoting commercial communication that is consistent with the NNHP's consumption benchmarks, without risk of confusion or ambiguity, when these benchmarks are cited or referred to directly or indirectly.

The DGCCRF representative, Dominique BAELDE, has been tasked with chairing the working group that will submit its conclusions to the Pilot Committee.

APPENDIX 2

The nutritional benchmarks
Below are the 9 benchmarks in detail



Fruits and vegetables: at least 5 per day

At mealtimes and as a snack between meals: raw, cooked, natural or prepared, fresh, frozen or as a preserve.

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Bread, cereals, potatoes and dry vegetables: at each meal and according to appetite

Prioritise whole grain cereals and brown bread. Encourage variety.



Milk and milk products (yogurts, cheese): 3 per day

Encourage variety. Give priority to cheeses that are richest in calcium and lowest in fat and salt.



Meat and poultry, fish products and eggs: 1 or 2 times per day

In smaller quantities than the accompanying foodstuffs. Meat: encourage a variety of types of meat and the leanest cuts. Fish: at least 2 times per week.



Added fats: limit consumption

Give priority to vegetable fats (olive oil, rapeseed oil, etc.). Encourage variety. Limit the intake of animal fats (butter, cream, etc.).



Products sweetened with sugar: limit consumption

Use caution with sugary drinks and foods that are both fatty and sugary (pastries, creamy desserts, chocolate, ice creams, etc.).

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Drinks: as much water as you like

During and between meals.

Limit the intake of sugary drinks (encourage low calorie drinks).

Alcoholic drinks: do not exceed 2 x 10 cl glasses per day for women* and 3 for men. 2 glasses of wine are equivalent to 2 half-litre glasses of beer or 6 cl of spirits.

** except for pregnant women, who are advised not to drink alcohol at all during pregnancy*



Salt: limit consumption

Use iodised salt. Do not add salt before tasting. Reduce the amount of salt added to cooking water. Limit consumption of salty appetisers and the saltiest cheeses and cooked meats.



day

Physical activity: the equivalent of a 30-minute brisk walk every

Make this part of your daily routine (walking, climbing stairs, cycling, etc.)

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