

FACTSHEET

Nutrient Profiles *It's time to stop dodgy claims*

In the supermarket today, it is common to see hot chocolate drinks boasting about iron and zinc content or sugary cereals making claims about vitamins. However, such claims often hide the true nature of the foodstuff. 'Nutrient profiles' can halt such misleading practices, but the EU is awfully late on this matter...

🗨️ What are nutrient profiles?

Nutrient profiles work like filters: they are criteria - or thresholds - which determine whether a food product is allowed to bear a nutrition or health claim. The purpose of establishing nutrient profiles is to prevent the use of misleading claims which give a healthy halo to foods that are rich in sugar, fat or salt. Foods that do not fit nutrient profiles would not be permitted to bear a claim.

Myth:

Nutrient profiles for claims are linked to colour-coded traffic lights.

Reality:

Such profiles do not aim to attribute colours to food-stuffs but just to keep them free of dodgy claims.

🗨️ What is the situation in the EU?

An EU law¹ foresaw that the European Commission should have developed nutrient profiles by January 2009. However, almost 10 years later we are still awaiting a proposal. In practice it means consumers are still exposed to bogus claims.

🗨️ How do profiles work?

Myth:

Nutrient profiles are too complex and difficult to develop.

Reality:

Nutrient profiles are already being employed outside of the EU. For instance, in Australia and New Zealand, any food product using health and nutrition claims must meet certain nutrition requirements.

Profiles work differently according to the type of claims:

Health claims: a health claim refers to the supposed health benefits the food will bring; e.g. 'Good for your bones', 'Good for your heart'.

- If a product contains too much of either fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar or salt, it will not be able to carry a health claim at all.

Nutrition claims: a nutrition claim refers to the nutritional composition of a food product; e.g. 'Low in fat', 'High in fibre'.

- If a product is higher than the threshold for only one of the nutrients (fat, saturated fat, trans fat, salt or sugar), it will be able to carry a nutrition claim under one condition: it must declare alongside this claim which of these nutrients it is high in. For instance, a chocolate snack with a claim 'source of calcium' would have to be accompanied by a disclaimer 'high in sugar'.

¹Regulation 1924/2006, Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation



What about foods that do not meet the profiles?

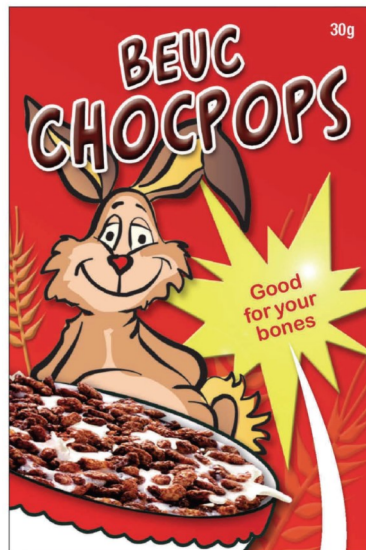
Nutrient profiles do not prevent foods from being placed on the market. They rather prevent unhealthy foods from bearing claims which could mislead the consumer as to the true nutritive value of the product. Therefore, a food which does not meet the nutrient profiles can continue to be sold but cannot bear a claim.

In the context of a widespread obesity crisis it is crucial that consumers are not encouraged with misleading claims to purchase products which are actually very high in, for example, sugar or fat.

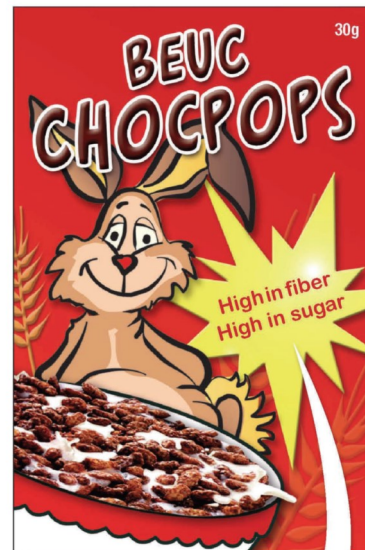
BEUC requests

Nutrient profiles are a crucially important part of the Health Claims Regulation and will help consumers to make an informed choice. The European Commission is currently evaluating nutrient profiles to assess whether they are still needed as part of the claims regulation. BEUC believes that they remain necessary to avoid misleading consumers and calls on the European Commission to come forward with its proposal for nutrient profiles as soon as possible.

Such profiles must be robust and scientifically backed to prevent claims from misleading consumers about the qualities of a food.



With nutrient profiles in place, this health claim would not be allowed for breakfast cereal if the amount of salt, sugar or saturated fat were higher than the defined threshold



With nutrient profiles in place, if the amount of one of the nutrients salt, sugar or saturated fat were higher than the threshold, the nutrition claim 'High in fiber' would still be allowed but only if accompanied by a disclaimer 'High in x nutrient', in this case, sugar