

FRONT OF PACK LABELLING

Executive Summary

The Committee is asked to:

- **Note** the information provided in this paper
- Discuss and inform the Agency how the committee wishes to prepare its response to the Agency's Proposals for Voluntary Front of Pack Nutritional Labelling for Foods consultation, which is expected to be launched shortly.

Food Standards, Diet and Nutrition

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ISSUE

1. The Committee is asked to discuss, at its meeting on 8th July 2009, how it wishes to respond to the Agency's Proposals for Voluntary Front of Pack Nutritional Labelling for Foods consultation, which is expected to be launched shortly.
2. This document provides a summary of the key findings¹ of the independent research, commissioned by the Agency, to evaluate consumer use and understanding of all Front of Pack labelling schemes currently in use in the UK. As the Agency is committed to using the findings of the research to inform our consultation, the Committee will wish to be aware of these findings and may wish to bear them in mind when considering its response to the consultation.

BACKGROUND

3. Since 2006, the Agency has recommended a voluntary front of pack labelling scheme which includes traffic light colour coding which indicates to consumers the levels of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar within the product. The FSA scheme has been widely adopted by many major food retailers and manufacturers. As other front of pack labelling schemes also exist, namely a Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs) scheme and a hybrid scheme, which incorporates both GDAs and the FSA traffic light scheme, an independent group of experts was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of these three schemes. On 6th May 2009, the group published their report and findings. The main conclusion of the research was that a single scheme combining, elements of the FSA front of pack scheme and the GDA scheme would be most helpful for shoppers. The key findings of the research are copied below:

- A single Front of Pack scheme would be most helpful for shoppers, as the presence of different types of Front of Pack labelling

¹ The Committee received copies of the PMP report on 6th May 2009

schemes in the marketplace causes shoppers difficulties in using them.

- Overall, the balance of evidence demonstrated that the strongest Front of Pack label is one which combines the use of the words **'high, medium, and low'**, traffic light colours and percentage of Guideline Daily Amount (GDA), in addition to levels of nutrients in a portion of the product.
- Shoppers who use Front of Pack labels value them; they use them particularly if they are shopping for children, comparing different products, if they have a particular health concern (e.g. high blood pressure or diabetes), or if watching their weight.
- There is a generally high level of understanding of Front of Pack labels, even among those who don't tend to use them, which suggests that raising awareness of a single scheme could encourage increased use of Front of Pack labels when buying food.

OTHER RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Board Discussion

A paper on the research findings was submitted to the Board meeting in May 09 and a further briefing session was held in June 09. However, in-depth discussion on the issue of Front of Pack labelling and the implications for the Agency's policy will only happen once the consultation has closed and the Agency has had time to consider the responses.

NEXT STEPS

The Committee is invited to discuss whether it wishes to set up a small sub-group to discuss the consultation in detail or if it wishes to hold its initial discussions on the consultation in an open session at the next meeting in September.

CONCLUSION

The Committee is asked to:

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