

**Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee
Food Standards Sub-Committee**

**Survey SF9
The Fat and Salt Content
of Reduced Calorie Sandwiches**

**Report
November 2006**

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1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this survey was to sample a wide range of low or reduced fat sandwiches and to establish if the fat and sodium contents found complied with the declared.
- 1.2 Of 156 samples submitted with a declaration of fat content in a nutritional table, the vast majority were within a reasonable tolerance of the declared values. Only six samples had a fat content that were not within a reasonable tolerance of the declared value.
- 1.3 Of the 155 samples submitted, the average declared sodium content was 0.36%. The average sodium content found was 0.34% and the vast majority of samples were within a reasonable tolerance of the declared value for sodium. Ten samples had 50% more sodium than declared. When allowance was made for those samples that only declared sodium to the first decimal place, four samples were still considered to exceed their declared sodium content by more than 50%.

2 Background

- 2.1 The sandwich market in the UK has grown to become a £3 billion industry. At the same time there has become a greater consumer awareness of the fat content of food, both by the general consumer and by the consumer who is attempting to regulate calorie intake to assist with weight control. As a result, many sandwich retailers are selling sandwiches with a low fat content and marketing them with statements that draw the consumer's attention to the positive effect of eating them and to the low fat content, using phrases such as "Good for You", "Healthy Living" and "Positive Eating" and statements such as "Less than 5% Fat".
- 2.2 In 2004 the West of Scotland Food Liaison Group carried out a survey of the fat content of low fat/reduced fat sandwiches to establish if the fat content was significantly higher than the declared values. The survey report criticised 10% of the samples as having excessive fat content compared to that declared.
- 2.3 Based on the 2004 results, the Food Standards Sub-committee decided to repeat the survey on a national basis. To add further value to the survey it was proposed that each sample be further analysed for sodium, which could also be compared with the declared amount.

3 Sampling

- 3.1 The target period for sampling was January to March 2006

4 Analysis

- 4.1 Analysis for fat and sodium was carried out at the four Scottish public analyst laboratories.

5 Results

5.1 Fat Content

Of the samples submitted, 156 bore declarations or claims that allowed comparison of fat found with the respective declarations. When assessing the fat content against declarations, account was taken of

- a) Any claim present on the packaging – e.g. “less than 3% Fat”
- b) The fat content declared in the nutrition table
- c) The LACORS Guidance on Tolerances to be applied to Nutritional Labelling Declarations 2003 which applied the following recommendations

Fat content greater than 5% allow \pm 20%

Fat content 2% -5% allow \pm 30%

At content less than 2% use discretion

This guidance document is currently under review

The table below shows those samples where there were significant excesses of fat with respect to declarations:

Sample Filling	Claim	Declared Fat %	Fat Found %	% excess
Egg Mayonnaise	25% less fat	6	7.8	30
Egg Mayonnaise with Salad	25% less fat	6	8.5	42
Prawn Mayonnaise	Less than 3% Fat	2.3	4.1	78
Roast Chicken	Less than 3% Fat	2.9	5.5	90
Tuna, Corn, Low Fat Mayo	Low cal	4.1	8.8	115
Sliced Egg Salad	Less than 5% Fat	3.4	5.3	56

In addition to the above, four samples showed fat in excess of the “less than X% Fat” claim. On the whole, however, these were only small excesses, although one declaring “Less than 6% Fat” had a fat content of 6.6%. None of these was significantly in excess of the fat content declared in the nutrition table.

5.2 Sodium Content

Of the samples submitted, 155 bore declarations or claims that allowed comparison of sodium found with the respective declarations. The average of the declared sodium contents was 0.36% and the average sodium content found was 0.34%

When assessing the sodium content against declarations, account was taken of

- a) The sodium content declared in the nutrition table
- b) And consideration was given to

The LACORS Guidance on Tolerances to be applied to Nutritional Labelling Declarations 2003 which applied the following recommendations for minerals

Declared Value + 100%

Declared Value -50%

This guidance document is currently under review

It is debatable whether the LACORS guidance is suitable for a mineral such as sodium, the reduced presence of which is considered desirable for health reasons. For sodium an allowance of 100% in excess of declared may, in certain circumstances, be too generous. In the batch analysed, accepting a sodium content at 100% in excess of the average 0.36% declared content would permit the presence of an extra 0.72g of sodium in a 200g pack. Accepting an excess of 50% would permit an extra 0.36g in a 200g pack. To assess the impact of this it should be noted that The Food Standards Agency recommends that an adult should consume not more than 6g of salt a day. This equates to 2.4g of sodium a day.

The excesses and deficiencies ranged from +150% (0.55% found against a declared 0.22%) to -65% (0.48% found against a declared 1.4%) although only a few samples were at these extremes. Ten samples had over 50% more sodium than declared, albeit that the declared values were mostly 0.2% to 0.4%. Only one sample (already referred to above) showed a deficiency greater than 50%

Those samples showing a sodium content that more than 50% in excess of declared are shown below

Sample Filling	Declared Sodium %	Sodium Found %	% excess
BLT	0.3	0.5	67
Topside of Beef	0.4	0.63	58
Egg and Cress	0.2	0.35	75
BLT	0.3	0.49	63
Salmon/Cucumber	0.3	0.47	57
Egg Mayonnaise/Cress	0.2	0.42	110*
Roast Chicken and Stuffing	0.22	0.55	150*

Chicken and Bacon Club	0.32	0.51	59*
Salmon/Cucumber	0.3	0.56	87*
Chicken/Balsamic Roasted Tomato	0.23	0.35	52

It was noted that some declarations for sodium were made to the first decimal place and that this could result in, for example, a declared content of 0.2% being applied to a product that had up to 0.24% and similarly a declaration of 0.3% being applied to a product that had up to 0.34%. If allowance was made for this in calculating the % excess sodium, only the four samples marked with an asterisk would still show a sodium excess of more than 50%.

It was also noted that the Topside of Beef sandwich was sampled more than once during the survey and the sodium content of these other samples was lower and closer to the declared value.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The results of this survey show that the fat content of the majority of sandwiches analysed is within an acceptable tolerance of the declared value. A small number were found to have fat contents than were higher than declared and outwith that tolerance. Each 1% of excess fat can add approximately 15 to 20 calories to the typical sandwich pack.
- 6.2 The results of this survey show that the sodium content of the majority of sandwiches is within an acceptable tolerance of the declared value. A small number were found to have sodium contents than were significantly higher than declared, albeit that only two of them exceeded that current recommended LACORS tolerance for declarations of minerals. Each 0.2% of additional sodium can add approximately 0.4g extra sodium to the typical sandwich pack.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The testing of the above types of sandwiches for fat and sodium content should continue to form part of routine surveillance programmes.

8 References

- 8.1 Working LACORS Guidance on Tolerances to be Applied to Nutrition Labelling Declarations: May 2003.