

# NAVIGATOR



## **Signpost Labelling**

### **Creative Development Of Concepts**

#### **Research Report**

Prepared for COI

On Behalf Of

Food Standards Agency

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of wider government initiatives to improve diet and health, the White Paper 'Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier' and the Food Standards Agency's Action Plan on Food Promotion and Children's Diets, set out plans to introduce a system of front-of-pack 'signposting' for foods. The purpose of the system is to make it easier for consumers to choose a healthy diet by providing 'at a glance' information about the nutritional content of foods.

In November 2004, the Agency published a report of the research we had carried out into the form of front-of-pack signposting that would be most useful to consumers. Of the five concepts tested, consumers liked two approaches significantly more than the others: the 'Simple Traffic Light' option and the 'Multiple Traffic Light' option. A concept based on Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) information was not viewed favourably, but some stakeholders have since commented that this may have been due in part to the design used. In view of these concerns, the Agency commissioned us to carry out some further focus group work to test other GDA-based designs, in order to identify an execution that could be included in later research that will test how well consumers understand the information provided by a range of signposting concepts.

As we found in the first phase of research, there was strong support among consumers for the idea of signposting as a tool to help them make healthier choices. The reactions to the features tested in the GDA designs we explored are summarised below:

- **Percentages / Numerical information:** there was a reasonably even division among consumers on whether the GDA information should be presented as a numerical value, or as a percentage. Where percentages were used, there was some confusion as to whether it represented the percentage of that nutrient in the food, or the proportion that food contributed to GDA for individual nutrients.
- **Bar charts:** again, there was no clear agreement. Where bar charts were used to present the percentage information, some consumers found them useful, others found them difficult to interpret and felt they added little value in terms of a visual aid.
- **Colour coding and high, medium and low descriptors:** These features, which indicated the level of individual nutrients in the food, were widely welcomed and were considered to help interpret the numerical GDA information. There was a clear consensus in favour of 'traffic light' colour coding. Most respondents indicated that they would use these features to

guide their purchasing decisions, and would only refer to the numerical data to differentiate between products with similar levels of nutrients, or if they had particular concerns about a specific nutrient. Without the descriptors, respondents found the numerical information difficult to use except at extremes.

Of the five GDA concepts tested, a numerically based concept which includes traffic light colours to indicate high, medium or low ratings for the content of each of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar was the option people felt most comfortable using.

The two traffic light concepts identified as most promising in the first phase of research were considered further. The research found that:

- **Multiple traffic lights:** Consumers felt that the addition of percentage GDA information made a simple system unnecessarily complex.
- **Simple traffic lights:** Consumers preferred accompanying text to be information based rather than advisory.

The results of this research will be used to inform the Agency's discussions with a range of stakeholders to decide which of the concepts to take forward into the next phase of consumer research.

## BACKGROUND

The FSA is promoting the adoption of healthier eating patterns: encouraging consumers to eat less fat, especially saturated fat, sugar and salt, and to eat more fruit and vegetables. The effectiveness of the whole nutrition strategy depends to some extent on consumers knowing or being able to find out about the nutrient content of the foods they eat.

The Government's White Paper 'Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier' was published in November 2004. The White Paper includes a commitment to have introduced a clear straightforward front of pack coding system (signposting) by early 2006 which aims to help people understand at a glance which foods can make a positive contribution to a healthy diet.

The first phase of qualitative research into the form of front-of-pack signposting that would be most useful to consumers was published by the Agency in November 2004. This demonstrated strong approval and support for the idea of front of pack labelling, which consumers felt would make it easier for them to assess the nutritional content of foods, and make healthier choices. Of the five concepts tested, two had significantly more promise than the others. These were:

- **A 'simple traffic light' system (option A)** - where foods are labelled with a single green, amber or red traffic light on the basis of their overall contribution to a balanced diet.
- **A 'multiple traffic light' system (option D)** – which rates each nutrient (for example as high (red), medium (amber) or low (green)).

Prior to agreeing which options to take forward for further testing, the Agency recognised that the execution on the GDA option could be usefully refined. A further phase of consumer testing was commissioned to test five revised executions of the GDA option, alongside the original version from the initial research.

- Option 3 – Roundels showing individual key nutrients signposted with GDA information (as used in original research. No colour coding or indication of high, medium or low ratings)
- Option 4 – Table showing key nutrients signposted using GDA information (without colour coding or any indication of the high, medium or low ratings).
- Option 5A – Bar chart showing % contribution of key nutrients to GDA (without colour coding or any indication of the high, medium or low ratings)

- Option 5B - Bar chart (with max. 50% scale) showing % contribution of key nutrients to GDA (without colour coding or any indication of the high, medium or low ratings)
- Option 6 - Bar chart showing % contribution of key nutrients to GDA with colour coding indicating high, medium and low
- Option 7 - Table showing key nutrients signposted using GDA information with colour coding indicating high, medium and low

The opportunity was also taken to consider alternative executions of Simple Traffic Light and signposting Multiple Traffic Light concepts to further inform their development. However, these executions were given lower priority in the research, both in the time allowed for their discussion, and in that they were always introduced last, and so findings on these routes from this stage of research should bear this in mind. The previous stage of research looked in detail at preferences between different concepts.

*The seven separate concepts tested, and versions thereof, are reproduced on page 6. Respondents saw the concepts on a range of example products, printed actual size on stiff board. The example products were chosen from a range of food and drink categories, and were representative of the broad spread in nutrient contents found across current products on the market.*

### SIGNPOSTING CONCEPTS

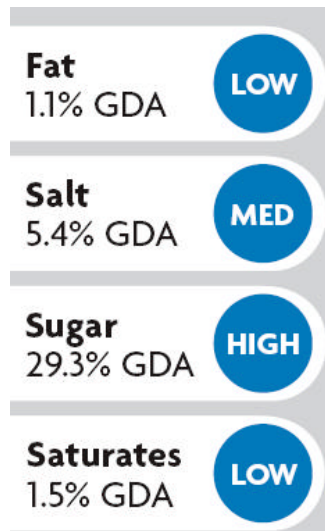
#### Option 1A



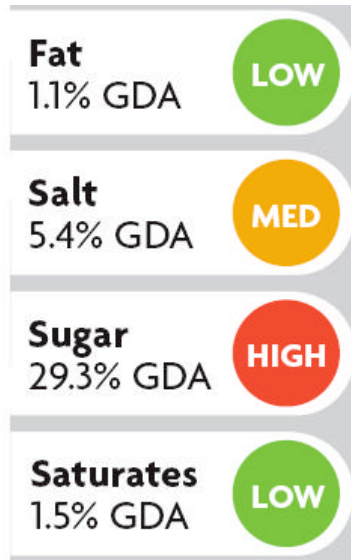
#### Option 1B



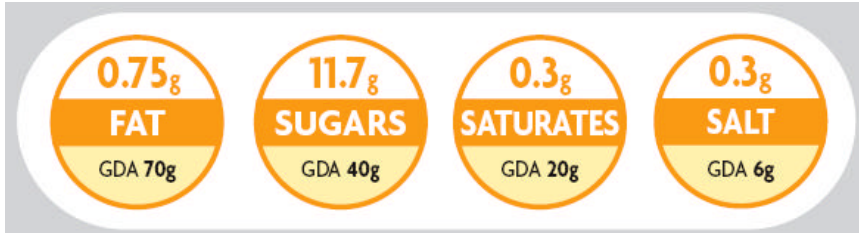
#### Option 2A



Option 2B



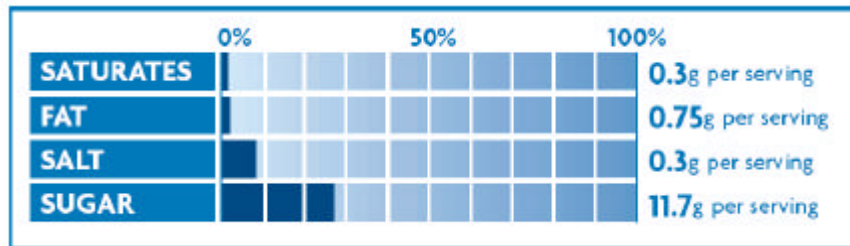
Option 3



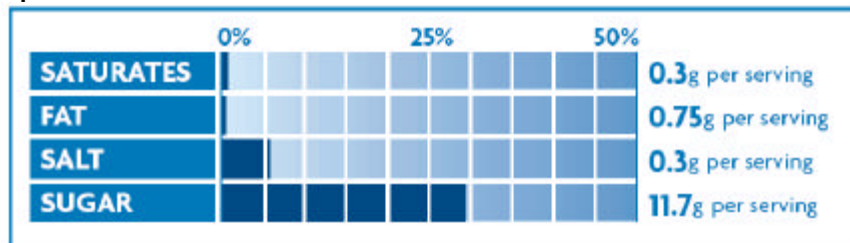
Option 4

<b>CALORIES</b>	155 per serving	GDA 2000
<b>SATURATES</b>	0.3g per serving	GDA 20g
<b>FAT</b>	0.75g per serving	GDA 70g
<b>SALT</b>	0.3g per serving	GDA 6g
<b>SUGAR</b>	11.7g per serving	GDA 40g

Option 5A

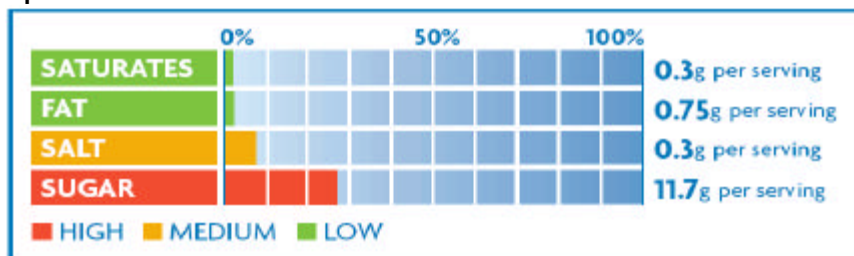


Option 5B



'+' used to indicate when the %GDA of a nutrient exceeds 50%.

Option 6



Option 7

<b>SATURATES</b>	GDA 20g	0.3g per serving
<b>FAT</b>	GDA 70g	0.75g per serving
<b>SALT</b>	GDA 6g	0.3g per serving
<b>SUGAR</b>	GDA 40g	11.7g per serving

■ HIGH ■ MEDIUM ■ LOW

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- Primarily, to inform the design of the GDA executions to take forward into further research
- Specifically
  - to gain insight into which of the executions for the concept performs best in terms of ease of understanding and expected ease of use
  - to provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of each execution
- Secondly, to further explore Simple Traffic Light and Multiple Traffic Light executions where time allowed

## Conclusions

## CONCLUSIONS

### GDA Executions

There is perhaps an inescapable issue in employing a GDA system, as the underlying concept requires a relatively large amount of information to be communicated. Inevitably this will be too much for some consumers whatever execution is used. Consideration should be given to whether this conflicts with the desired role of front of pack labelling, particularly given that the nutrition panel will continue to be available.

As might perhaps have been expected there was a more or less even division between those who felt that bar charts and percentages were an effective way of communicating GDAs, and those who found numbers easier to work with. It seems likely that if a GDA system were to be introduced there would be some increase in acceptability of either approach (percentages or numbers) with increasing familiarity. However, we consider it unlikely that it will be possible to create an approach that everyone finds accessible and easy to work with.

Option 7 worked well for some as a 'hybrid' route which combined traffic lights for key nutrients with GDA information. A key driver of its appeal was the simple and intuitive communication delivered by the colour coding, and most respondents felt they would be likely to use the system mainly at this level, referring more occasionally to the GDA information when they required a further level of differentiation. This might be, for example when choosing between products, or if monitoring a nutrient over which they had particular concerns, with salt being the most frequently offered example.

Some found the route off putting, however, feeling that it looked complicated and 'hard' due to the GDA information. Some negative comment focussed on the use of numbers to deliver the GDA information.

The route's (Option 7) communication of GDAs was welcomed by some, as they felt that it was useful to have some idea of what a typical daily intake should be for the listed nutrients. Some understanding of the basis of the GDA (ie, male, female, child) and of a typical serving will be necessary for those seeking to use the system to 'count' daily intake. However, we suspect this will only represent a small proportion of the system's use, and arguably the nutrition panel already caters for those wishing to do this, although in a less accessible form.

A degree of explanation was required for all routes employing bar charts and percentages, which was that the bars and percentages referred to the food's contribution to GDA, and *not* to the proportion of the food made up by the key nutrient, for example, 20% of the GDA for salt, rather than salt accounting for 20% of the product.

Some reacted positively to 'bar chart' routes feeling that the 'graphic' nature of the bars offered an easily absorbed way of presenting information. Others found both bar charts and percentages difficult to get to grips with, and there was a sense that use of these devices could 'block' them from engaging with the system at all.

Without colour coding respondents found bar charts easiest to use at extremes when a food item made up a significant proportion of a day's diet in itself, for example, a ready meal which was either very high or very low on nutrients of concern (eg, 50% vs 5%). In these cases they felt there was either a clear case for caution, or alternatively that there was a suggestion that there was little to worry about. Where scores were less extreme there was no context, and it was found harder to assess or appreciate their significance, that is, did the score mean the foodstuff's levels of nutrient content were relatively high, relatively low, or 'average'? This was exacerbated where the item concerned was not a main component of a day's diet in itself, but together with other such items could add up to a significant proportion of a day's diet, for example, a few biscuits, a couple of bags of crisps, a bowl of cereal and so on. In such instances the implicit, 'at a glance' nature of the bar chart as a graphic device led some to underestimate the significance of content, as the immediate inference was that there was 'nothing to worry about'.

Option 6, using a bar chart with added colour coding helped to address these concerns, as the colours offered an easily grasped way of conveying a foodstuff's level of content on the nutrients covered. Having said that, this did not offer a universal solution as might perhaps have been expected, as those who were uncomfortable with bar charts and percentages still found the overall presentation hard to work with due to the other elements it contained over and above the colour coding.

### **Multiple Traffic Lights**

While some thought addition of GDA percentages to this concept was useful, others found them unhelpful. Some of these respondents were able to focus on the 'traffic light' and ignore the percentages, but others felt the percentages got in the way, and made a potentially simple system unnecessarily complex.

A major strength of the Multiple Traffic Lights route revealed in the previous stage of research was its simplicity, and trying to accommodate GDA within it may lessen its appeal and usefulness for some.

The addition of GDA percentages to this route provoked similar concerns as with GDA routes, that is, it needed to be made clear that this was 'per serving', and that this was the percentage of GDA provided by the product, and not the percentage of the food made up by that particular nutrient. The second point was

less an issue for this route than for others researched because of the juxtaposition of '%' with 'GDA'.

There was a unprompted positive reaction to the simplicity of this system, principally the colour coding or 'traffic lights', and the 'high, medium, low' annotation. Aesthetics might also play a part in how a system will be received and this route looked simpler and cleaner than some others, which helped to suggest that it would be easier to grasp and to work with. This reaction is similar to that observed in the initial qualitative study.

### **Simple Traffic Light**

Two versions of this concept were presented, one which used the legend, 'eat plenty, eat in moderation, eat sparingly', and another, 'low / medium / high fat, salt or sugar'. The rationale for this choice of options was that a potential weakness of this concept revealed in previous research where only the former legend was used, was that some consumers disliked the advice element. The legend referring to 'fat, salt or sugar' also resolved concerns that the system was not explicit about its scope, causing some to assume that other issues, such as use of GM technology were included.

The factual approach was preferred, however many felt that the reference would be to all the listed nutrients in the case of a green traffic light, or any one of them for a red traffic light, which was confusing. Those whose concerns focused on one specific nutrient, felt this offered them relatively little help as they would still have to read the nutrition panel in order to arrive at a decision.

In these tests this system was generally considered to be too simplistic to be helpful in comparison to other routes. However since in this study it was always seen after the GDA and Multiple Traffic Light routes had been explored, this does not undermine the conclusions of the initial qualitative study.

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## **Research Findings**

## **GDA ROUTES**

### **Likely Use Of A GDA System**

In the course of discussion it emerged that respondents had in mind two (non exclusive) ways of using a GDA system. Some saw the system as an indicator of how individual foods 'measured up' on listed nutrients, while others envisaged using it as a means of 'counting' total nutrient intake across a day. It was accepted that these two modes of usage were not mutually exclusive, and that the former was in some ways a building block for the latter.

In deciding which system to develop, and the wider merits of a GDA system, consideration should be given to the likely extent of each mode of use. Based on this and the previous stage of research we believe that use of a system to evaluate individual foods is likely to predominate for most people most of the time. Those who thought they would use a GDA system in this way felt that they would arrive at a healthier shopping basket and diet by monitoring individual foodstuffs and cutting down on those over which they had concerns. A smaller proportion of respondents who had greater concerns (for example in relation to salt) may operate in the latter mode as well to ensure they do not exceed their guideline daily allowance.

#### Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 4

This execution was not thought particularly inviting. Its use of 'numbers' suggested that it would require effort to use to a level which was in itself off-putting to some.

*"I wouldn't even read it, it seems really difficult. It's harder to know what's in it."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

The meaning of the information was thought reasonably clear with a little study, and was correctly interpreted as the amount of each nutrient per serving, and the guideline amount for total daily consumption.

Despite its poor reception the execution was initially felt to be a helpful addition to the nutrition panel due to its focus on the main nutrients of concern. Respondents felt that this allowed for a much simpler presentation which made it simpler and easier to read.

*"It's much clearer, you can see what it says because it's bigger than on the back."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

While there were no real comprehension problems and the execution was interpreted as intended there was some discussion of whether it would be easier to read from left to right, serving to GDA, or from GDA to serving. This may have been in part an effect of the order of introduction of executions, and there was no clear conclusion. It is likely that people would become used to whichever way it is executed.

The sense of 'GDA' was usually correctly understood even if incorrect words were attributed to the acronym, which was most commonly re-played as 'guideline daily allowance'.

*"General daily amount, general daily allowance? It's your daily limit."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

'Per serving' raised inevitable questions of what exactly might constitute a serving. It was assumed that this would be detailed elsewhere on the packaging, and even if not most felt that it was a useful starting point, which was more helpful than 'per 100g', and would enable comparison between products providing that 'servings' were standardised.

*"I like per serving, it's much easier than per hundred grams."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

On further consideration this execution was thought unlikely to be significantly easier to use than 'the back of the pack' on a day to day basis as it required study, and there was no 'immediate' communication of the significance of the scores, that is whether the foodstuffs had levels of the listed nutrients that should prompt caution or not. A 'pure' GDA system such as this only really seemed to have value for those who envisaged 'counting' their total daily intake of listed nutrients which relatively few did. Otherwise it only had more immediate meaning in the case of relatively extreme examples, for example, '0g per serving, GDA 6g', '5g per serving, GDA 6g'. Respondents found it much harder to assess or appreciate the significance of a score which was more marginal. The same was true where the item concerned was not a main component of a day's diet, for example, a yoghurt, a biscuit, etc.

The inclusion of 'calories' was welcomed by some women who calorie counted, and some men, on behalf of female partners who calorie counted. However, many respondents, male and female, thought that 'calories' were relatively unimportant. This was partly because their concerns were focused on 'health' and they associated calories with 'dieting' motivated by weight loss and appearance, but also because many felt they could broadly equate higher fat and sugar content with higher calorific content anyway.

### **Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 7**

This route was well received, although not universally so. Its use of colour coding was thought to confer immediate and clear significance. Interpretation of the route was intuitive, along the lines of a 'traffic light', with red signalling 'caution', green, 'safety', and amber as 'intermediate' or 'in between'.

*"Oh I like that, you can work that out straight away."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

*"Really like it, it's a good idea."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

*"My eyes would be drawn to the red first."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

Respondents felt that a key benefit of a colour coded system was that it would be harder to ignore or to turn a blind eye to, both at the point of purchase and subsequently at home.

*“You know what these foods are like probably, but you can ignore it. With that it’s harder.”*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

Some concerns were expressed over colour blindness, and how those affected by it would be able to use the route.

There were no real comprehension problems with the GDA and ‘per serving’ information presented in the route, with respondents interpreting it in a similar way to option 4, in this case the guideline amount for total daily consumption and the amount of each nutrient per serving. The route sparked a similar debate on the merits of ‘per serving’ following GDA and vice versa, again without clear conclusion.

Respondents were largely positive in their comments on the idea of using this system, most often when those concerned had in mind working solely or largely from the colour coding without ‘drilling down’ into the per serving / GDA information.

*“You’d look at the colours, the amounts aren’t as important.”*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

*“You’d know that red is high. It’s the colours you’d look at, everyone knows those colours, - traffic lights, you’d go and find products which were green or maybe amber.”*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

This was either because they simply did not want to go further than the colour codes, or, because they had specific nutrient concerns, for example, salt, and imagined these concerns leading to ‘buy don’t buy’ decisions depending on the colour code. So continuing with salt as an example they thought that they would probably only buy products which were coded ‘green’ on salt.

The per serving / GDA information could be thought useful as offering a further level of differentiation if that was required, for example, in deciding between two products with a similar colour profile, or, in trying to decide whether to buy a particular product or not such as one they particularly liked or that had no obvious substitute but had a colour code they were uncomfortable with.

Communicating GDAs could be seen to be worthwhile in itself, as it was thought useful to have some idea of what consumption of key nutrients should be, even if it was hard to conceptualise what this meant.

There were differing views on the ease of working with 'numbers', that is the GDA and per serving information expressed in grams. Some felt they made the route look very complex and that they would be difficult or even impossible to use in practice, while others thought that they would be able to use them if they needed to do so. There was no clear pattern in this related to age, sex or SEG.

*"You'd have to work at it – it's not 'grab it and go.'"*

Mothers, 25-34, C1C2, South

Some had reservations over the use of 'high, medium, and low' bands, querying the basis on which the banding been arrived at?

*"It doesn't say what low medium and high means."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

However, such reservations may well be softened if the scheme has sufficient authority when introduced. This authority could potentially be conferred by government / FSA backing and if it were to be adopted by several major retailers and manufacturers.

### **Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 5A**

This route generated a polarised reaction

Many felt that it looked very complicated and hard to use. This was largely because of the use of both bar charts and percentages which were unfamiliar to them, and because they found the overall appearance of the route complicated, with a lot to take in.

*"The bars – you'd have to think about them, they're not instant. They need explaining."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

Respondents also felt that this execution would lack 'stand out', and be relatively easy to ignore, partly because of its overall complexity and also because of the use of a single relatively drab colour.

It was hard to determine exactly why those concerned found bar charts and percentages hard to use. These respondents clearly understood both devices at a rational level, and themselves accepted that they ought to be able to use both,

but doubted that they would be able to do so. Some claimed to have never really got to grips with them in their education, and to have encountered them little since. In the case of percentages some had difficulty in conceptualising what percentages that added up to more than 100 would mean. They thought of a percentage as a type of fraction, and could only understand their use to describe part of a whole and not more than a whole. The two devices presented a 'mental block' as far as they were concerned which prevented them engaging with the route. Many of these respondents had a clear preference for colour coding, and in some cases for weight (numbers) over percentages. In this case the numerical per serving information was not accompanied by GDA information so this option was not open to them, and anyway the overall effect of the other devices and information was to make the route inaccessible.

*"I prefer the grams. When you start putting percentages I get confused, I was never good at percentages at school. If it's like 20 and the amount a day is 40 I know where I am, but if it's 50% I get confused."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

*"I had trouble with fractions and percentages at school."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

Others responded positively to the route and felt the bars were a simple way of presenting information.

*"The shorter it is on the bar chart the healthier it is."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

*"But it's easier to read on a pack – more graphic. It would be easy to get used to and you wouldn't need your glasses."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

In some cases this was because they thought it was easier to see the bars than to read numbers on a pack. These respondents were comfortable with percentages, although they thought they would primarily use the graphic of the bar.

Irrespective of preferences it emerged that bar charts and percentages could be misinterpreted. Respondents often took them to be indicating the proportion of the foodstuff made up by the nutrient rather than the proportion of the GDA contributed by the foodstuff, for example, 'it's 50% fat', rather than 'it's 50% of your GDA for fat'. This type of misinterpretation might be hard to counteract.

*“Does it mean 11.7% of that is sugar?”*

Male, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, South

The route was similar to route 4, in that it had more value if respondents envisage ‘counting’ their overall daily intake of nutrients, or in the case of relatively extreme examples, eg, ‘5% GDA per serving’, ‘50% GDA per serving’. It was harder to assess or appreciate the significance it conveyed where scores were less extreme, or where the foodstuff was a more incidental part of a day’s diet. In this last area, the implicit, ‘at a glance’ nature of the bar graphic could lead to the significance of nutrient content being underestimated. Put very simply, some were prone to assume that a short bar meant the foodstuff was ok, as there was no other guidance as to the significance of the level of content. This meant there was no inference for the implications of eating several of a ‘small bar’ item.

*“This would be easy to explain to children – you could tell them that long is bad.”*

Mothers, 25-34, C1C2, South

The need for and role of ‘grams’ in the route was unclear in the absence of the GDA expressed in weight, and this information was only likely to be of use to those who already knew what GDAs for the listed nutrients were.

### **Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 5B**

This 50% bar option was universally rejected. It was thought to potentially gloss over the truth about high percentage options, with respondents pointing out that there was a big difference between 53% and 85% for example. Conversely the full bar and ‘+’ sign could be interpreted as ‘completely off the scale’, in the sense of a huge content of the nutrient, leading to out of hand rejection. Respondents felt that if both 50 and 100 % versions were in use there would be widespread confusion.

*“The scale should be 100 – 50+ could be anything!”*

Mothers, 25-34, C1C2, South

*“50+ makes me think there’s loads in there.”*

Mothers, 25-34, C1C2, South

### **Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 6**

In theory this option could have offered something of the best of both worlds as it combined bar charts and percentages with colour coding.

However, it did not overcome the dislike some had for percentages and bars. It was felt to look complex on initial showing, and was compared unfavourably to option 7 by these respondents.

*"I don't like this, it's very complicated, what are all those blue boxes."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

*"That's confusing. Percentages and numbers."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

Some thought they might use the route by paying attention only to the colours of the bars, but many felt that the other elements still got in the way and made the prospect of engaging with the system unappealing.

*"It doesn't come across as easy, it looks too complicated, it's less easy to use the colours."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

Those who had responded positively to route 5A could feel that the coloured bars were an improvement, and some of those who expressed this view thought that in this case colour would replace bar length as their primary cue, while others thought that the effect of the colours was to enhance perceived differences between bars by helping to distinguish one bar from the next.

*"That's even better, colour coded."*

Fathers, 35-54, C2DE, Midlands

*"The colours make it more recognisable, and easy to read. I'd be drawn to the fat and salt."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

The use of colour was thought likely to improve stand out generally on front of pack.

*"It's easy to see at glance. It would put you off some products."*

Mothers, 25-34, C1C2, South

Comprehension and communication issues were the same as for 5A, that is, there was a need to make it clear that bars and % refers to 'of GDA', and it was

easy to underestimate the significance of small bars. Colour coding could help to overcome the second issue but might be confusing for some foodstuffs. For example, would it be possible to have a short bar coloured red, because there is a relatively high proportion of the nutrient in a foodstuff which contributes relatively little to GDA on a per serving basis.

### **Reactions to GDA Executions – Option 3**

Reactions to this route were the same as those reported from the previous stage of research. In summary a purely numerical system was thought difficult to work with, and the presentation was seen to be flat and uninteresting. This route would probably only be used by the most committed, and was less engaging and easy to work with than some other GDA examples.

## REACTIONS TO MULTIPLE TRAFFIC LIGHT EXECUTIONS

### Reactions To Multiple Traffic Light Executions - Option 2B

These routes were always shown second to last, after the GDA executions. There was a positive reaction to the perceived simplicity of the system, principally due to the colour coding and the legend 'high, medium, low'. The colour coding was thought intuitive and easy to grasp, and the 'traffic light' analogy was more widely grasped than with GDA versions, mainly due to the route's use of stacked circles which was seen to be literally reminiscent of a traffic light.

*"You want something easy you can see straight away. I can understand it, it looks straightforward."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

*"It's a lot less fussy (than the GDA routes) – it's a lot simpler."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

*"It's a traffic light system – I'd be drawn to the colours."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

The addition of the words 'high, medium, low' helped counteract concerns over colour blindness.

Aesthetics might also have played a part in positive reactions to this concept, as it was thought that the execution looked cleaner, simpler, and neater than many other routes, which in turn made it more approachable.

Use of percentages provoked similar concerns as with GDA routes. It would need to be made clear that it is the proportion of the GDA, not the food that is referred to. Some felt that percentages were easy to work with while others felt they did not really understand them and thought they never would. Having said this, most respondents felt they would work primarily with the route's colour coding.

The effect of additional information, in this case, percentages, suggested more information could detract from the route. Some felt they could ignore the percentages because they did not find them helpful. These respondents were able to focus on the 'traffic light' for each nutrient, whereas others found the percentages got in the way, and made a simple system seem more complicated.

*"It's clearer, more at a glance. There's no need for the percentages."*

Navigator

Female, Empty Nesters, 45-54, C2DE, South

### **Reactions To Multiple Traffic Light Executions - Option 2A**

Reactions to this route were largely negative compared to 2B, as it lacked colour coding which was felt to be the route's major strength.

## REACTIONS TO SIMPLE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEMS – 1A, 1B

These routes were always shown last, after GDA and Multiple Traffic Light routes had been explored. In this context they were seen as too simplistic.

As in the previous stage of research the 'global' advice of 'eat plenty, in moderation, sparingly' was open to misinterpretation in that a wider set of 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' attributes could be inferred to a foodstuff than the system actually covered. For example, it could be thought to embrace 'E numbers', or 'GM' food. The nature of the advice was also thought lacking in meaning, and didactic.

*"That's a bit cheeky, eat sparingly."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

Use of the words 'high in fat, salt or sugar' solved some of these problems as the system's scope was to some extent made clear, and using these words meant it was delivering *information* rather than advice. However, the approach was felt to be too imprecise, as the words could have referred to any combination of the nutrients, and respondents found it hard to feel confident in such a description. This was particularly the case for those whose concerns focussed on specific nutrients, who felt that they would invariably have to read the nutrition panel anyway in order to feel confident of their choices if this system were to be employed.

*"That doesn't help me, I'm much more concerned with salt than I am with sugar."*

Female, Empty Nesters, 55-64, C1C2, Midlands

*"Has it got all three in it? What does it mean."*

Mothers, 35-44, C2DE, South

## **APPENDICES**

Research Sample

Procedure

Recruitment Questionnaire

Discussion Guide

## RESEARCH SAMPLE

Group discussions were the chosen method for conducting the research.

The decision was taken to structure the sample by life-stage as it was felt that this would be an important factor affecting attitudes to diet and health, and to confine the sample to 'family' and 'empty nester' life stages, as the previous consumer research suggested that they would be most motivated to make use of 'signposting'

In summary the research sample was as follows.

- Six group discussions
  - Age 25-44, older and younger families, 3 groups
    - 25-34, 1 x female C1C2
    - 35-44, 1 x female C2DE, 1 x male C2DE
  - Age 45-64, empty nesters, singles or couples with no children living at home, 3 groups
    - 45-54, 1 x female C2DE,
    - 55-64, 1 x female C1C2, 1 x male C1C2
- All respondents had main or in the case of the men, some, responsibility for food shopping
- Fieldwork was conducted from the 10th to the 14th February, in Erdington West Midlands, Wallington, Surrey and Staines, Middlesex.

A copy of the recruitment questionnaire is contained elsewhere in the appendices.

## PROCEDURE

A copy of the discussion guide is contained elsewhere in the appendices. The order of discussion was as follows.

- Moderator introduction, explanation of purpose of discussion, 'to look at some different ways of putting headline information about food on the front of packaging'
- Introduction of executions and exploration. Each signposting execution was shown *in situ* on a range of widely available products. These were presented on stiff boards which were passed out to respondents. In addition an example of each individual concept was similarly available for the moderator's use.
  - GDA executions were always covered first in rotated order, and occupied the bulk of the discussion as the primary objective of the research was to explore these routes
  - Multiple Traffic Light executions with added GDA and Simple Traffic Light (two versions) routes were discussed in any time remaining. The findings for these routes should be assessed in light of the fact that they were always seen last, after considerable discussion of GDA routes

**RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Q1 I am conducting a market research survey. Can you tell me if you or any of your friends or relations work, or have ever worked in any of these occupations? **READ OUT:**

- ADVERTISING-----1
- MARKET RESEARCH-----2
- PUBLIC RELATIONS-----3
- MARKETING-----4
- PUBLISHING-----5
- JOURNALISM-----6
- BROADCASTING-----7
- PRODUCTION, SALES & DISTRIBUTION  
OF FOOD-----8
- DIETICIANS AND NUTRITIONISTS-----9

**IF ANY OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED, CLOSE**

Q2 a) Have you ever attended a market research group or interview?  
Yes-----1 – **GO TO Q2b**  
No-----2 – **GO TO Q3**

b) when did you last attend a group or interview?  
In the last year-----1 – **CLOSE**  
Over a year ago-----2 – **GO TO Q2c**

c) how many groups/interviews have you ever attended?\_\_\_\_\_

d) what was the subject of the groups/interviews you attended?

WRITE IN\_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONDENTS SHOULD NOT HAVE ATTENDED MORE THAN  
3 GROUPS EVER, AND NEVER ON THE SAME SUBJECT AS  
THE CURRENT ONE**

- Q3 How much of a role do you play in buying food in your household?  
 Do all of the buying ----- 1  
 Do most of the buying----- 2  
 Do some of the buying----- 3  
 Do very little buying----- 4  
 Do none of the buying ----- **CLOSE**

**FEMALE RESPONDENTS: ALL TO AGREE WITH STATEMENTS 1-3.  
 MALE RESPONDENTS: 3 PER GROUP TO AGREE WITH  
 STATEMENTS 1-3 AND 3 TO AGREE WITH STATEMENT 4.**

- Q4 a) How often do you look at nutrition information on the food you buy?  
 Never----- 1 - **CLOSE**  
 Sometimes----- 2  
 All the time----- 3

b) thinking about the amount of fat, sugar and salt in the food you buy and eat, and the food you buy on behalf of your family, which best describes you or your household?

- I haven't really given it much thought ----- 1  
 I can't see the point of being concerned about what's in the food I or my family eat, I never have been and I never will be----- 2 **CLOSE**  
 I'm quite concerned about what is in the food we eat and try to watch what is in the food I/we eat, but I don't always manage to----- 3  
 I would like to watch what is in the food I/we eat but I don't think I would find it very easy---- 4  
 I watch what is in the food I/we eat from time to time ----- 5  
 I watch what is in the food I/we eat, but I don't do it all the time----- 6  
 I'm really concerned about what is in the food we eat for health reasons, and I always look carefully when buying----- 7

**FEMALE FAMILY, FEMALE EMPTY NESTER GROUPS:  
 AT LEAST 2-3 RESPONDENTS PER GROUP  
 TO AGREE WITH STATEMENT 3 AT Q4a AND STATEMENT 7 AT Q4b.**

**IN ALL GROUPS EXCLUDE ANY WHO AGREE WITH STATEMENT 1  
 AT Q4a AND STATEMENT 2 AT Q4b**

- Q5 Do you or anyone who you buy food for, need to keep a check on the amount of salt, fat or sugar they eat due to medical reasons?  
Yes----- 1  
No----- 2

**EMPTY NESTERS GROUPS: AT LEAST TWO PER GROUP TO SAY YES.**

**FAMILY GROUPS: 2 PER GROUP TO SAY YES.**

**CLASSIFICATION**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLD'S MAIN INCOME EARNER \_\_\_\_\_

**PROBE FOR FULL DETAILS**

SOCIAL GRADE:	C1	1
	C2	2
	D	3
	E	4

**GROUPS 1, 5 AND 6: C1C2.**  
**GROUPS 2, 3 AND 4: C2DE**

OWN OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

AGE:	25-34	1 – <b>GROUP 1</b>
	35-44	2 – <b>GROUPS 2 AND 3</b>
	45-54	3 – <b>GROUP 4</b>
	55-64	4 – <b>GROUPS 5 &amp; 6</b>

SEX:	Male	1 – <b>GROUPS 3 AND 6</b>
	Female	2 – <b>GROUPS 1, 2, 4 AND 5</b>

MARITAL STATUS:	Married/cohabiting	1
	Divorced/separated	2
	Widowed	3
	Single	4

PRESENCE & AGES OF CHILDREN AT HOME: None 1

CHILDREN AT HOME: WRITE IN \_\_\_\_\_

**GROUP 1: ALL WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AT HOME (UNDER 11)**  
**GROUPS 2 & 3: ALL WITH OLDER CHILDREN AT HOME (12-18)**  
**GROUP 4: EMPTY NESTERS/NO CHILDREN AT HOME**  
**GROUPS 5 & 6: EMPTY NESTERS/NO CHILDREN AT HOME**

ETHNIC ORIGIN:	White –	British	1
		Irish	2
		Other	
		WRITE IN _____	3
	Mixed -	White & Black Caribbean	4
		White & Black African	5
		White & Asian	6
		Any other mix	
		WRITE IN _____	7
	Asian or Asian British –		
		Indian	8
		Pakistani	9
		Bangladeshi	10
		Other	
		WRITE IN _____	11
	Black or Black British –		
	Caribbean	12	
	African	13	
	Other black background		
	WRITE IN _____	14	
Chinese or other ethnic background –			
	Chinese	15	
	Other		
	WRITE IN _____	16	

DATE OF GROUP \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

I AM NOT A FRIEND OR RELATION OF THE RESPONDENT, AND TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE HE/SHE IS NOT KNOWN TO ANY OTHER RESPONDENT IN THE GROUP

RECRUITER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## 1046 COI / FSA: SIGNPOSTING CDR DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Moderator introduction, explanation of purpose of discussion, to look at some different ways of putting information about food on the front of packaging, - stressing that this would be in addition to back of pack nutrition labeling which would continue unchanged
- Introduction of executions
  - GDA executions to be covered first in rotated order (use original if appropriate)
  - followed by Multiple Nutrients with added GDA without colour coding
  - followed by Simple Traffic Light with revised wording

Simple verbal explanation of where the execution would appear, '*something that would appear on the front of all food packaging*', introduce accompanying 'in situ' examples (explain that nutrition panel would stay)

- Key questions
  - initial reactions?
  - what is their understanding from the execution, how would they explain it to a friend?
  - how helpful or otherwise would it be?
  - do they feel they would understand how to use it? what is it suggesting to them about the food? eg, buy but only occasionally, 'never buy', live on this alone, or a good part of a diet etc, etc

### Secondary questions

- understand what the food they buy contains? or is it confusing?
- how would they imagine using it? eg, across all food they buy, in 'culprit' categories, for children, for family members with health issues, etc, etc
- would they use it to help address any dietary concerns?
- how easy would it be to use in their food purchasing?
- Explain at appropriate point if not grasped
  - do they now feel they understand how the concept is supposed to work
  - establish where the gaps in understanding were between concept and explanation
  - reprise earlier discussion, how useful would it be, how would they use it, how easy would it be to apply, etc
  - how much explanation is required, and how do they feel this should be delivered

- GDA routes

Key questions

- use of colour coding vs numbers alone, which part of the route do people use and why
- use of colour coding alongside high, medium and low (HML) indicators, does it help people understand HML, or is it not necessary
- extent to which 'bar charts' help comprehension

Secondary questions

- use of %ages vs amounts, do people find them different to work with and why
- are there any issues with bar charts, for example could they downplay or exaggerate the significance of some foods given relationship between size of bar, %age / amount and food type
- is 50% bar easier to understand, or might it potentially confuse or mislead
- how easy would these routes make choosing between different products in the same category
- was the inclusion of any single nutrient, e.g. calories, particularly useful
- do people understand the relationship between % GDA and % per 100g, or do they find this confusing

- Compare and contrast GDA options

- which of the GDA designs do they feel are of most use and why
- of the graphical formats, which did they prefer and why
- which elements of the design do people find particularly helpful and why
- was it useful to have colour coding alongside high, medium and low indicators?
- are there any other possible designs that could be used?

- Multiple Traffic Lights with GDA

- which elements (ie HML or % GDA) do people react to
- is it useful to have both, for what reasons
- would it be helpful to have colour coding alongside HML indicators

- Simple Traffic Light

Key questions

- Do people prefer the factual option (high in fat, salt or sugar) or the advice option (eat sparingly). Does the meaning change at all, and does it affect how the route might be used
- How would they feel if no wording was used

Secondary questions

- understanding of wording, 'low fat, salt or sugar', etc
- how is this interpreted, ie, do they understand this could just mean one nutrient, or could mean all three, etc
- does 'or' cause confusion, or prompt further questions
- would they look at nutrition panel for clarification and why
- note any alternative wording that is suggested

- Thank and close