



BULLETIN INTENDED FOR INTERESTED PARTIES

Update on Children's Reference Intakes

The EU Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (EU FIC) currently provides only for the use of adults' reference intakes (RIs), unless a Member State implements a national measure (legislation or guidance) allowing the voluntary use of different RIs for 'specific population groups' such as children. EU FIC also tasks the European Commission to adopt implementing acts on the "indication of reference intakes for specific population groups", but the Commission has not yet made any plans to do this.

In May 2013, the Department of Health asked the Scientific Advisory Commission on Nutrition (SACN) to consider:

- whether there might be any public health grounds for the UK to adopt Children's Reference Intakes for food labelling purposes, and
- whether the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)'s work on children's guideline daily amounts could form the basis of any independent UK action and to consider any associated risks and benefits to such an approach.

In its report, SACN concluded that one set of RIs for children could not adequately reflect the variation in energy level requirements and nutrient recommendations for different childhood ages and stages of development. It also advised against using the IGD values as the basis of any UK national measure because these were out of date.

SACN highlighted the complexity of this issue and identified some of the difficulties that would have to be resolved when developing children's RIs. In addition, as this is an issue the EC is mandated to look at, the development in the UK of any RIs for specific groups could be overtaken by work at a European level.

A pragmatic approach is called for at this stage. We therefore recommend that businesses choose one of the following three options for their products marketed specifically for children:

- use adults' RIs with colour coding, and the descriptor that identifies these as adult RIs, as per the 2013 front of pack labelling scheme; or
- do not declare adults' RIs, and use colour coding only; or
- do not provide front of pack information at all – for this limited number of products

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