

Eating Well Choosing Better

Explains the Eating Well, Choosing Better programme and the goals this initiative aims to achieve.

The Eating Well Choosing Better programme supports small and medium sized food businesses to reduce the calorie, sugar, saturated fat and salt content of the food they produce, sell or serve, as well as reducing portion sizes to help consumers make healthier choices.

The programme aligns with the UK Government's [Sugar reduction and wider reformulation programme](#) which encourages all sectors of the food industry to reduce calories, sugar and salt in foods which contribute most to these intakes.

We work with a range of stakeholders across Northern Ireland including district councils and academic institutions to support the food industry to make food healthier by:

- reformulating products to lower the levels of sugar, saturated fat or salt
- reducing the portion size, and/or the number of calories in single-serve products
- shifting consumer purchasing towards lower or no added sugar products

Bakery reformulation webinar

As part of the Eating Well Choosing Better programme, the FSA hosted a webinar for the bakery sector to engage with local businesses on reformulation and provide information on the wide range of support available. Speakers at the webinar included two local bakeries who worked successfully with the FSA to reformulate bakery products, an ingredient supplier who outlined the advice and support they can provide to bakeries and Invest NI who discussed the available funding opportunities.

Watch a recording of the Bakery reformulation webinar:

Scone reformulation guidance

Scones were identified within the 'morning goods' category of the Eating Well Choosing Better programme as a food of particular relevance to the Northern Ireland population. Foods included in this category are amongst the top ten contributors to sugar intake in the UK. In Northern Ireland, scones are frequently consumed as a mid-morning snack and are also regularly served at meetings and events.

The FSA, in partnership with the 11 district councils in Northern Ireland, surveyed and sampled a range of scones available from high street coffee shops during 2018, to determine the level of calories, fat, sugar and salt. The [project](#) found the average scone contained 408kcal (one fifth of the recommended daily calorie intake), 20g of sugar (equivalent to five sugar cubes) and 1.9g of salt (one third of the guideline daily amount) (FSA 2018).

The FSA, in partnership with the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, has created [guidance](#) (and a [summary](#)) to help businesses produce great-tasting, healthier scones lower in calories, fat, sugar and salt. The guidance contains recipes and tips businesses can use to make

their own unique scones that meet the Government guidelines for calories, sugar and salt, as well as providing novel ideas on how to make smaller sized scones appealing to customers.

Cheesecake reformulation guidance

'Puddings' such as cheesecake, pies, tarts, crumbles and gateaux are one of the top ten sources of sugar in the UK diet. Cheesecake is recognised as a food of particular relevance to the Northern Ireland population, as it is a popular option, with many restaurants and hotels offering it as a hand-made dessert on their menus.

The FSA and the 11 district councils carried out a [survey](#) of cheesecake served in restaurants and hotels in Northern Ireland to determine the typical portion sizes and nutritional composition of this popular pudding. The results showed that portion sizes are often very large with bigger cheesecakes containing more energy, sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt.

The FSA in partnership with the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise have created [guidance to help businesses produce cheesecake lower in calories, sugar, saturated fat and salt](#). The guidance also provides innovative ideas on how to make smaller sized portions of cheesecake appealing to consumers. To support businesses to use the advice contained in the technical guidance, recipe resources containing the ingredients and preparation instructions for a range of fruit, chocolate and luxury cheesecake are also available.

You can also download PDF versions of the cheesecake reformulation guidance and recipes:

- [Cheesecake reformulation technical guidance](#)
- [Fruit cheesecake recipes](#)
- [Chocolate cheesecake recipes](#)
- [Luxury cheesecake recipes](#)

Consumer perceptions research

We commissioned [independent research exploring Northern Ireland \(NI\) consumers' perceptions of product reformulation](#) (to reduce levels of sugar, saturated fat and salt) and reduction in portion size by the NI food industry.

The research focused on categories included in the [Eatwell Guide](#) and [Public Health England's sugar reduction programme](#):

- Breakfast cereal
- Morning goods
- Ice cream
- Yoghurt
- Cake
- Pudding
- Biscuits

The key findings were:

- Acceptance for food reformulation exists regardless of what people believe the rationale for it is or who they think is driving it. However, acceptance is significantly lower when people are told that it is driven by industry than when told that it is driven by government or when not told anything at all
- Acceptability of reformulation (both reformulated and resized products) rests on three conditions – that the new products match old ones in terms of taste, value and health/safety properties of replacement ingredients (i.e. that they are no worse for people

than the originals)

- Acceptability of resized products is generally lower as people believe consumers are losing out at manufacturers' gain
- While there is broad acceptability, consumer concerns surrounding taste, value and health/safety properties will need to be addressed in roll-out and communications to guarantee the initiative's success. Shoppers are making quick on-the-spot decisions often guided by habit. Both changes to the retail environment and clear in-store and product information will be key
- The retail environment is seen as the logical place for engagement initiatives such as in-store demos, tastes tests and information stands – given the questions people have surrounding reformulation, being able to engage with new products prior to purchase can help allay doubts, create positivity and raise general awareness in turn prompting word of mouth
- Finally, there is an important role for public education and a proactive government voice to build public trust in the initiative and make the consumer benefits of reformulation clear

For more information on reformulation email Kathleen.Mooney@food.gov.uk

Eating Well Choosing Better newsletter

The FSA in Northern Ireland publishes an Eating Well Choosing Better newsletter containing the latest consumer insights and technical information for food manufacturers, caterers and retailers in Northern Ireland.

[Sign up to the Eating Well Choosing Better newsletter here.](#)