

Food and drink manufacturers views on front of pack nutritional labelling

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

Study duration: 2019-11-01

Conducted by: Community Research and 2CV

Background

The FSA in NI is responsible for leading on food product improvement with small and medium sized enterprises and for providing consumers with nutrition education and information to make healthier choices.

Voluntary FOPNL is recognised as an important tool to support consumers to better understand the nutritional content of food and drink and to encourage the purchase of healthier food. FOPNL has also been shown to motivate food manufacturers to reformulate their products to reduce calories, saturated fat, sugars and salt.

Consumers are becoming more health conscious and are increasingly using information on the healthiness of food when making food purchasing decisions. For this reason, the FSA sought to gain a better understanding of how and why decisions about FOPNL are made by NI food and drink manufacturers.

Approach

As part of the [Eating Well Choosing Better](#) programme, two independent research organisations, Community Research and 2CV, were commissioned to conduct 40 qualitative telephone interviews with different types of NI food and drink manufacturers in NI.

Key findings

Food and drink manufacturers who had implemented FOPNL generally found the process to be straight forward and felt positive about this labelling scheme. Amongst those who had introduced FOPNL, the primary reasons for doing so were to:

- Simplify nutritional information for consumers
- Meet the requirements of retailers and consumers
- Highlight a product's health qualities
- Give the product a professional image
- Future-proof the product in case FOPNL becomes a mandatory requirement

The main challenges cited by food and drink manufacturers for not implementing FOPNL included:

- A lack of space on packaging

- FOPNL not fitting with the food product's look and feel
- The cost of the additional nutritional analysis and label redesign
- The lack of technical expertise needed to calculate the nutritional value of food and drink products

Perceived lack of consumer demand for FOPNL and a reluctance to highlight a product's unhealthy elements were also common reasons cited for not implementing FOPNL.

FOPNL encouraged the food and drink manufacturers in this research to undertake reformulation. Many food and drink manufacturers had previously reformulated products or did so on an ongoing basis to continue improving the healthiness of products, and by extension their FOPNL.

The cost of reformulation and the difficulty of maintaining taste were identified as key challenges to reformulation for many food and drink manufacturers.

The full results are outlined in the [Front of Pack Nutritional Labelling in Northern Ireland - Research with Food Manufacturers](#) report.

Summary

The findings of this research demonstrate food manufacturers who display FOPNL associate this type of labelling with a wide range of benefits. However, some food manufacturers still face challenges in implementing FOPNL and others don't view it as a priority. To encourage further uptake of FOPNL and participation in reformulation, it will be necessary to improve NI food manufacturers understanding of the factors that influence NI consumers food purchasing behaviours and to provide more support both technically and financially.