



Food
Standards
Agency
food.gov.uk



Healthier and more sustainable vending












A guide to nutritional standards and sustainability in vending



Healthy eating and sustainability are becoming more important to customers. Research by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) highlights that consumers would like to see healthier food and drink options and are concerned about food waste.

This guidance sets out practical suggestions to help make the food and drink in vending machines healthier, by providing options which are lower in calories, fat, sugar and salt. The tips on more sustainable vending will help reduce waste and encourage recycling.

The following basic principles support the ambition for healthier and more sustainable vending.

Nutrition Principles	Sustainable Principles
 <p>Water is widely available and the best source of hydration.</p>	 <p>Water is available through water fountains where possible.</p>
 <p>Sugar free drinks are widely available.</p>	 <p>Packaging is recyclable where possible – for hot drinks, allow for reusable cups.</p>
 <p>Food and drink items which are high in fat, sugar and salt are limited.</p>	 <p>Bins are provided for waste and recycling in line with council policies.</p>
 <p>Appropriate product placement within vending machines to support the selection of healthier options.</p>	 <p>Produce is locally sourced where possible.</p>
 <p>Food and drink items high in fat, sugar and salt are not advertised or promoted.</p>	 <p>Local suppliers and maintenance contractors are used where possible.</p>
	 <p>Vending machines are energy efficient e.g. set to the correct temperature.</p>

Nutritional standards

It can be useful to introduce nutritional standards for the food and drink sold in vending machines e.g. by setting a calorie or sugar limit per product. This can provide a reduction in the overall calories, fat and/or sugar purchased by customers. Introducing nutritional standards in phases may be beneficial to give vending suppliers time to source alternative food and drink and give customers time to become familiar with any new products.

A suggested phased approach is outlined in Table 1 for cold drinks and Table 2 for snacks.

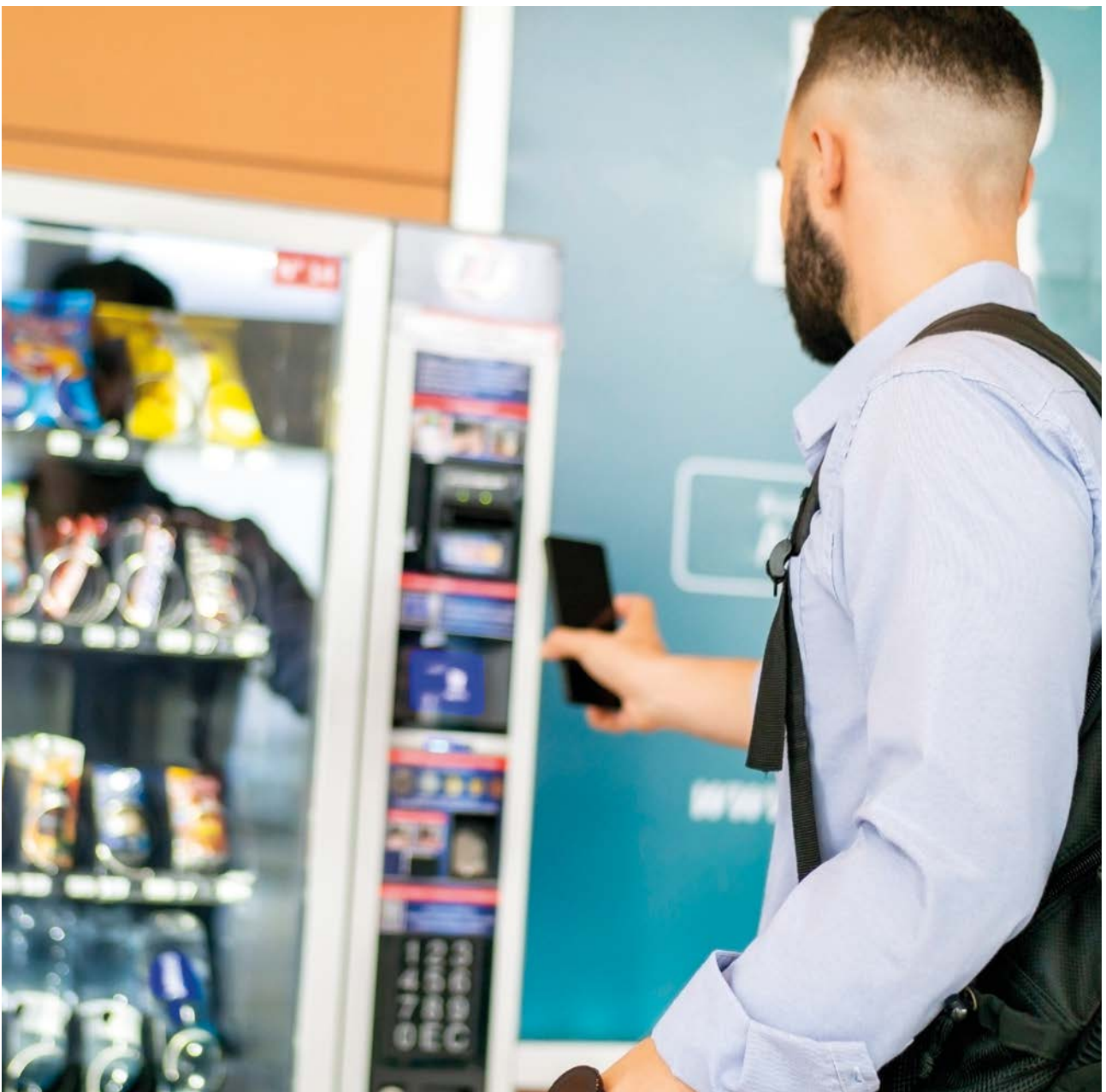


Table 1. Nutritional standards for cold drinks in vending machines

Type of beverage	Water	Low sugar drinks	Milk based drinks	Fruit or vegetable juice & smoothies	Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSB)
Max serving size	None	500ml	200ml	200ml	330ml
Drink definition/ what's included	Still and sparkling unflavoured water. Half of the water stocked must be still water.	Beverages containing less than 5g sugar per 100ml.	Milk, flavoured milk, and milkshakes or milk substitute drinks with less than 5g added sugar per 100ml.	Fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies with no added sugar.	Beverages containing 5g sugar or more per 100ml.
Phase 1 Percentage of drinks in vending machine	40%	50%			10%
Phase 2 Percentage of drinks in vending machine	40%	60%			0%



Sports drinks

Isotonic rehydration drinks (sports drinks) are drinks that provide carbohydrates and electrolytes that support hydration during exercise.

For recreational users, water is adequate for maintaining hydration. Where intensive training is undertaken by individuals or teams, isotonic sports drinks may be useful for rehydration.

Sports drinks that contain **more than 5g sugar per 100ml** are sugar sweetened beverages and should not be included for sale in vending machines in phase 2. Sports drinks that contain **less than 5g sugar per 100ml** can be included as part of the low sugar drink allocation.

Energy drinks

The UK government defines energy drinks as soft drinks that contain higher levels of caffeine than other soft drinks. They can also include high levels of sugar (>5g per 100ml), although lower sugar options are also available. Under current labelling rules, any energy drink containing over 150mg/l of caffeine requires a warning label.

The UK government has committed to banning the sale of energy drinks to children under sixteen. As vending machines are accessible by both children and adults, **energy drinks should not be available for sale in vending machines.**



Table 2. Nutritional standards for ambient snacks in vending machines

Vending item	What's included	Nutritional standards	
		Phase 1	Phase 2
Savoury snacks 	Potato crisps, corn puffs, onion rings etc.	Max 250 kcal per product	Max 200 kcal per product
	Reduced fat/baked crisps or corn snacks.		
	Vegetable crisps e.g. mixed root veg, beetroot, parsnip etc.		
	Savoury biscuit snacks e.g. rice cakes, multigrain snacks etc.		
Dried fruit and nuts 	Plain, unroasted nuts e.g. peanuts, cashews, mixed nuts.	Max 250 kcal per product	Max 200 kcal per product
	Dried fruit e.g. raisins, sultanas, cranberries, fruit mixes.		
	Chocolate or yogurt coated dried fruit or nuts.		
	Fruit and nut mixes.		
Chocolate 	Chocolate bars or bags.	Max 250 kcal per product	Max 200 kcal per product
Cereal bars 	Bars made from cereal grains like oats, rye, rice, and wheat.		
Confectionery 	Packets or rolls of boiled sweets, chews, jellies, fudge, liquorice, toffees etc.		

Although the vending of cold drinks and snacks are more common, other vending options are becoming more popular.

Healthier vending of hot drinks

Where hot drinks are offered:

- ✓ Provide unsweetened hot drinks such as tea, herbal teas, and coffee as the default option.
- ✓ In the case of milky drinks such as a cappuccino, semi skimmed milk should be offered as the default option.
- ✓ Sugar or sweeteners should be offered in separate sachets.
- ✓ Where options such as soup, hot chocolate, and other drinks are offered, reduced calorie options are preferable (if available) and can be offered alongside higher calorie options.



Healthier vending of chilled food

It is recommended that at least 50% of the food items available are healthier alternatives. Some ideas for chilled healthier options include:

Sandwiches

- ✓ Include a variety of breads such as sliced bread, wraps, rolls, flat breads, baguettes etc. and 50% of these items should be a source of fibre (**at least 3g fibre per 100g**).
- ✓ Use reduced fat mayonnaise, salad cream or spread.
- ✓ Include sandwiches that do not contain mayonnaise or salad cream.
- ✓ Aim for low fat fillings with protein sources including vegetarian options.

Prepared salads

- ✓ Include salad leaves and other salad vegetables, protein sources including vegetarian options and consider the inclusion of pasta, rice, seeds, quinoa, or other grains.
- ✓ Consider having the dressing in a separate container.

Yoghurts and dairy desserts

- ✓ Include low fat and/low sugar varieties

Fruit

- ✓ Consider fresh whole fruit, bagged berries, fruit slices or chunks.

Implementing the nutritional standards



Tips for sourcing drinks and snacks

- ✓ Choose products lower in saturated fat, sugar and salt where available.
- ✓ Ensure all snacks and drinks meet the appropriate calorie limit for Phase 1 or Phase 2 as appropriate.
- ✓ Check the nutritional information and size of products carefully to ensure they comply with the standards.
- ✓ Remember the calorie cap applies to the whole item purchased regardless of the manufacturer's suggested portion size.
- ✓ Avoid grab/share bags as these are likely to be too big.



Tips for promoting healthier vending

Promotion:

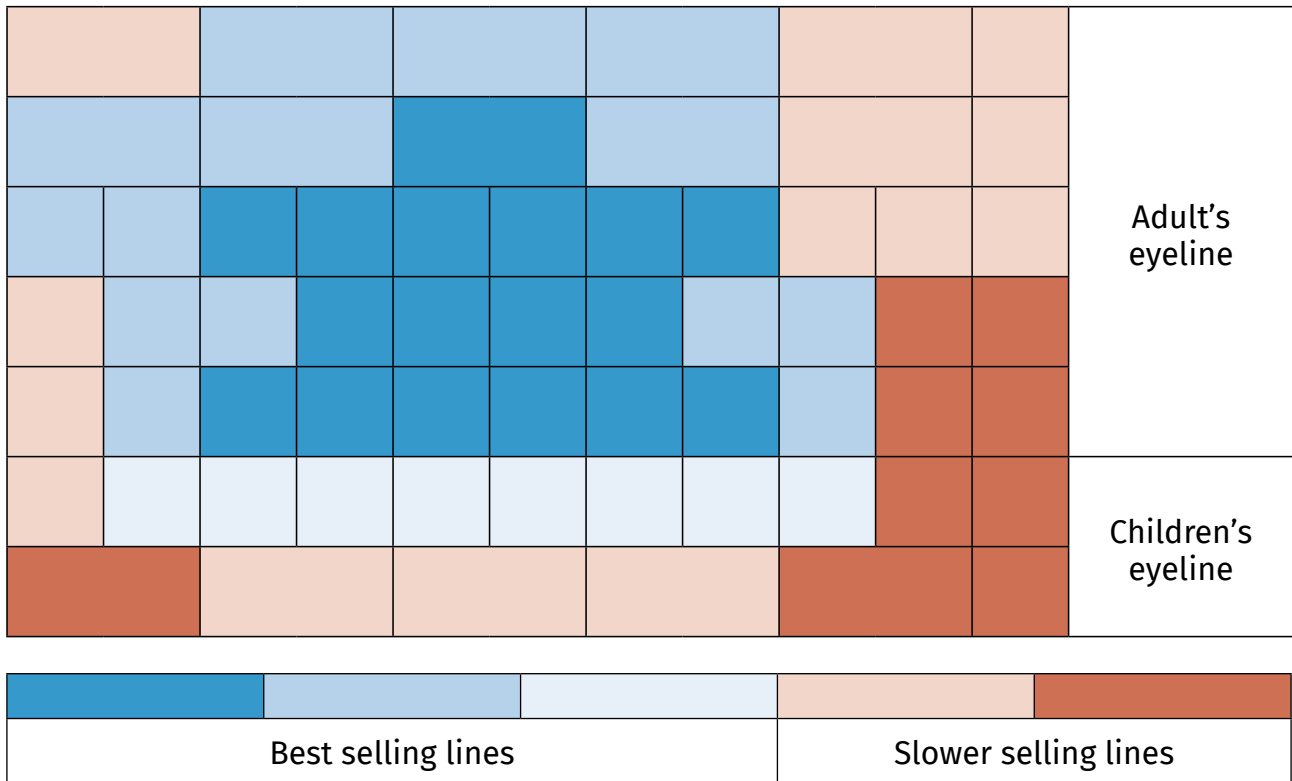
- ✓ Stickers, posters or signage can be used to promote healthier vending items as well as the nutritional standards.
- ✓ Display information on healthy eating next to or close to the machine e.g. the Eatwell Guide or calorie information.

Placement:

- ✓ The sales of healthier food and drink can be increased by placing them in prime locations within a vending machine i.e. the locations with the highest selling potential mainly at eye level.
- ✓ Where children are purchasing food and drink items, care should be taken to ensure that water, sugar free drinks and the smallest packets of savoury snacks, confectionery and chocolate are at their eyeline and in the central portion. Please see Figure 1.



Figure 1. Product placement and eyeline ranges



Acknowledgement: British Dietetic Association Healthier Vending – Criteria for 'Better Choice' & 'Healthy Choice' products.





Tips on vending contracts

Organisations with vending contracts in place can work with the vending supplier to introduce nutritional standards. Contracts can differ from one organisation to another, however, below are some general tips to help organisations introduce healthier vending.

If your organisation is **signing a new contract**, or **already has a contract** with a vending supplier that can be amended:

- ✓ Provide the supplier with a copy of this guidance document and ask if they can provide products that meet the nutritional standards.
- ✓ Hold a meeting with the vending supplier, and work with them to meet the nutritional standards.
- ✓ Check if the placement of healthier options can be optimised (e.g. eye level/middle column).
- ✓ Make sure the contract includes wording that products must meet the nutritional standards.
- ✓ Include information about the food or drink that does not meet the nutritional standards e.g. energy drinks.

If your organisation is **locked into a vending contract**:

- ✓ Consult with the supplier and encourage them to meet the nutritional standards before the contract expires – many vending companies offer a healthier vending range and will be happy to source healthier vending options that will meet the standards.
- ✓ Check if the placement of healthier options can be optimised, (e.g., eye level/middle column).
- ✓ Determine the length and expiry of the contract and plan ahead for new contracts.





Tips for more sustainable vending



Recycling

- ✓ Ensure cans, bottles or cups can be recycled.
- ✓ Consider the use of smaller sized products to reduce waste and litter.
- ✓ Ensure recycling bins are close to vending machines to support recycling of suitable packaging.
- ✓ Where possible, additional items such as lids or stirrers should be recyclable. Consider the use of washable spoons where practical.
- ✓ Consider promotion of 'bring your own cup' schemes.
- ✓ Ensure disposal of tea, tea bags and coffee pods etc. is in line with waste management and recycling policies.



Local stock and suppliers

- ✓ Stock locally produced food products, supporting local manufacturers where possible.
- ✓ Use local suppliers, where possible, to source products that comply with the standards and to refill and maintain vending machines.



Water provision

- Drinking fountains and cold-water taps make water easily accessible, promote hydration and support sustainability when refillable water bottles are used.
- ✓ Provide access to free drinking water where possible, for example, through a drinking water dispenser.
 - ✓ Encourage use of refillable water bottles.



Chilled food

- ✓ Offer fewer options that contain red meat or meat products.
- ✓ Include beans, pulses, nuts, seeds, and other plant proteins where possible.
- ✓ Source fish from sustainable sources.
- ✓ Offer milk and dairy foods in moderate sized portions.
- ✓ Offer wholegrain breads and rolls.



Food
Standards
Agency
food.gov.uk



Produced by the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland).

© Crown copyright 2024

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Further information is available on our website:
www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/healthier-food-reformulation.

