

GDA and the CIAA Nutrition Labelling Scheme

THE FACTS

What is the CIAA Nutrition Labelling Scheme?

In 2006 the Confederation of the Food and Drink Industry of the EU (CIAA) made a commitment to implement a voluntary nutrition-labelling scheme for the entire food and drink industry, across all EU Member States. The scheme is based on internationally accepted and scientifically derived Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs) and aims to encourage consumers to adopt a balanced diet as part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

What are GDAs?

GDAs are a guide to how much energy and nutrients are present in a portion of a food or beverage. So the GDA label makes it easier for consumers to see what proportion of their daily nutritional needs is met by a particular food or drink and helps them to choose a balanced diet.

Each portion contains

Calories
139
7%

of an adult's GDA

What has to be listed?

A 'Front-Of-Pack' (FOP) label, such as the one below, shows the energy (i.e. calories) provided by a portion of the product, as well as what percentage of an adult's energy needs is provided by one portion.

Back-Of-Pack (BOP) labels provide nutrition information per portion for a more detailed list of nutrients (at a minimum: energy, sugars, fat, saturated fat, and sodium/salt). A back-of-pack label might look like this:

Each portion contains

Calories 139 7%
Sugars 6.0g 7%
Fat 3.6g 5%
Saturates 1.0g 5%
Sodium 0.2g 3%

An adult's Guideline Daily Amount

The CIAA labelling scheme leaves companies free to list more than energy content on the front of packaging if they so choose, and if label and product size allow. Some companies have chosen to list all five nutrients on the front-of-pack label.

Why do we need GDA Labels?

The GDA scheme delivers simple, at-a-glance, objective information that enables the consumer to make a nutritionally informed choice.

The GDA scheme enables the consumer to understand and evaluate both an individual food product and its place within the daily diet. It empowers consumers to compose a balanced diet, adapted to their individual needs and in tune with their individual lifestyle.

How are GDAs calculated?

GDAs are based first of all on nutrition and diet recommendations from the Eurodiet project. Eurodiet is a panel of scientific and policy experts established in 1998 by the European Commission to pull together scientific information on nutrition, diet and healthy lifestyles.

Given that caloric needs vary according to age and gender, Eurodiet made no specific recommendation on energy intake. Nevertheless nutritionists and dieticians widely accept a daily intake of 2000 calories (kcal) as the average needed by an adult, moderately active, woman, and it is this figure used by the CIAA as the basis for its front-of-pack labels.

More recently, The independent scientific body, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), adopted its Opinion in March 2009 on the 'Review of labelling reference intake values'. The Opinion endorsed the science underpinning GDAs with regard to the reference values used in the CIAA scheme, most notably for calories (2000 kcal) and also for sugars, fat, saturates and salt/sodium. See:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902511922.htm

Which companies use GDAs?

By the end of 2008, 1,030 brands across the EU are using GDA labelling (For example, 80% of all soft drinks and branded breakfast cereals in the EU). The table below gives examples of major EU manufacturers that will have GDA labels on their products by the end of 2009.

Manufacturer	% of production volume with GDAs by:		
	June '08	Dec '08	Dec '09
Campbell	65%	95%	100%
Coca-Cola	89%	100%	100%
Ferrero (Kinder & Nutella)			100%
Groupe Danone	79%	90%	100%
Kellogg	100%	100%	100%
Kraft	30%	52%	100%
Mars	35%	75%	100%
Nestlé	60%	100%	100%
PepsiCo Beverages	91%	100%	100%
PepsiCo Snacks	81%	99%	100%
Unilever	50%	90%	100%

Published April 2008

Other large companies, retailers and SMEs are also implementing GDA labelling. CIAA in 2008 commissioned independent research into the success of the scheme. It surveyed 2,026 food and drink producers-including both multinational companies and small family-owned businesses¹.

The research revealed that, while large companies lead the way, 58% of medium-sized companies and 34% of small companies are also using or planning to use GDA labels.

(1) Apco Insight, research conducted November 2007 and mid-March 2008 in France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.





GDA: The Facts. Your Choice.

WHY NOT COLOUR CODED LABELS?

There is a fundamental difference between GDAs and 'Multiple Traffic Lights' (MTLs), as a colour-coded nutrition labelling scheme is known. GDAs provide objective nutritional facts about the nutrients and the energy in a portion and show what it would contribute to an individual's diet. MTLs are a subjective assessment of whether 100g of the food would contain a high, medium or low amount of each nutrient and do not provide consumers with the information needed to choose a balanced diet. The assessment is the same regardless of the portion size or of the person's diet. This fundamental difference also makes it inappropriate to combine both schemes in a 'hybrid'.

■ GDAs help consumers to balance their diets

The information provided by the GDA scheme helps consumers to see what any combination of foods contributes to their daily needs. Colour coded schemes cannot do this. If anyone ate only foods colour coded green, their diet would be seriously lacking in calories and several other nutrients, including iron, calcium and some vitamins.

■ GDAs are objective; colours make judgements

Classifying foods into 'green - amber - red' is misleading: it makes a blanket judgement about the food and suggests there are good and bad choices which can be applied to everyone. This is not the case. People have different dietary needs. GDA labels provide nutritional facts about food, making it possible for consumers to judge for themselves whether a certain quantity of food is appropriate for them. We believe that the key to making consumers more 'food literate' lies in encouraging them to look at what's inside the food they are buying and think about it in the context of their whole diet. Education is key!

■ No one always eats in 100g portions

Most foods are not eaten in 100g portions but this is the portion size used by colour-coded scheme. For instance a normal 20g portion of ketchup contains 5% of the GDA for sugar: a relatively small part of the amount an average adult female is recommended to consume. Based on its 100g sugar content it would however be colour-coded red.

■ Colour-coding obscures the healthier option

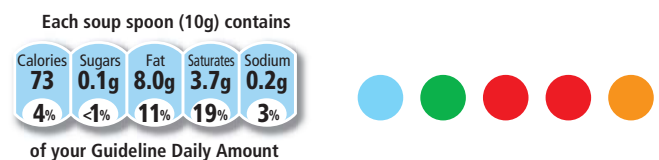
Colour coding does not help consumers assess food in the context of a daily diet and has no educational value. In addition, colour-coding is too simplistic and makes it harder to see which option contains less of any particular nutrient. For example, the salt content of two ready-meals could differ significantly but be colour-coded amber in both cases. This makes it impossible for consumers to know which option contains least salt. GDAs, on the other hand, would tell consumers if one contained 33% of the GDA of salt and the other 21%. Consumers are encouraged to think of 'red',

'amber' and 'green' labels as traffic lights i.e., 'stop', 'hesitate' or 'go' but are not encouraged to understand why. If drivers were faced with a red, amber and green light shown simultaneously they would not know whether to proceed or stop. In the same way, if a consumer sees a product labelled red, amber and green for different nutrients, it is unclear whether they should eat the food or not. GDAs make it possible for each of us to decide how to proceed.

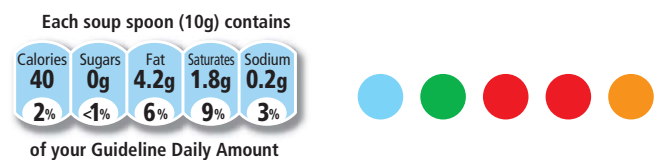
In practice, the traffic-light system hides important differences in the nutritional content of products.

These three products containing significantly different amounts of saturated fat would all be colour coded red for saturates:

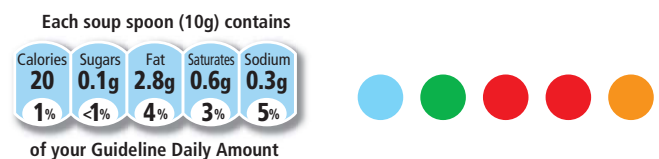
Full fat spread - one soup spoon has 19% of your daily saturates



Half fat spread - one soup spoon has 9% of your daily saturates



Low fat spread - one soup spoon has 3% of your daily saturates



For more information on GDAs,
the CIAA and healthy lifestyles see:

- <http://gda.ciaa.eu>
- www.active-lifestyle.eu
- www.ciaa.eu