

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF NUTRITION CLAIMS

CAC/GL 23-1997

Nutrition claims should be consistent with national nutrition policy and support that policy. Only nutrition claims that support national nutrition policy should be allowed.

1 **SCOPE**

- 1.1 These guidelines relate to the use of nutrition claims in food labelling.
- 1.2 These guidelines apply to all foods for which nutrition claims are made without prejudice to specific provisions under Codex standards or Guidelines relating to Foods for Special Dietary Uses and Foods for Special Medical Purposes.
- 1.3 These guidelines are intended to supplement the Codex General Guidelines on Claims and do not supersede any prohibitions contained therein.

2 **DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 *Nutrition claim*¹ means any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular nutritional properties including but not limited to the energy value and to the content of protein, fat and carbohydrates, as well as the content of vitamins and minerals. The following do not constitute nutrition claims:
 - (a) the mention of substances in the list of ingredients;
 - (b) the mention of nutrients as a mandatory part of nutrition labelling;
 - (c) quantitative or qualitative declaration of certain nutrients or ingredients on the label if required by national legislation.

¹ This definition is identical to the definition in the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985, Rev.1-1993).

2.1.1 **Nutrient content claim** is a nutrition claim that describes the level of a nutrient contained in a food.

(Examples:² "source of calcium"; "high in fibre and low in fat";)

2.1.2 **Comparative claim** is a claim that compares the nutrient levels and/or energy value of two or more foods.

(Examples: "reduced"; "less than"; "fewer"; "increased"; "more than".)

2.1.3 **Nutrient function claim** is a nutrition claim that describes the physiological role of the nutrient in growth, development and normal functions of the body.

(Examples: "Calcium aids in the development of strong bones and teeth";
"Protein helps build and repair body tissues";
"Iron is a factor in red blood cell formation";
"Vitamin E protects the fat in body tissues from oxidation".
"Contains folic acid: folic acid contributes to the normal growth of the fetus.")

3 **NUTRITION LABELLING**

Any food for which a nutrition claim is made should be labelled with a nutrient declaration in accordance with Section 3 of the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling.

4 **NUTRITION CLAIMS**

4.1 The only nutrition claims permitted shall be those relating to energy, protein, carbohydrate, and fat and components thereof, fibre, sodium and vitamins and minerals for which Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) have been laid down in the Codex Guidelines for Nutrition Labelling.

5 **NUTRIENT CONTENT CLAIMS**

5.1 When a nutrient content claim that is listed in the Table to these Guidelines or a synonymous claim is made, the conditions specified in the Table for that claim should apply.

5.2 Where a food is by its nature low in or free of the nutrient that is the subject of the claim, the term describing the level of the nutrient should not immediately precede the name of the food but should be in the form "a low (naming the nutrient) food" or "a (naming the nutrient)-free food".

6 **COMPARATIVE CLAIMS**

Comparative claims should be permitted subject to the following conditions and based on the food as sold, taking into account further preparation required for consumption according to the instructions for use on the label:

6.1 The foods being compared should be different versions of the same food or similar foods. The foods being compared should be clearly identified.

² Examples included for clarification of definitions.

- 6.2 A statement of the amount of difference in the energy value or nutrient content should be given. The following information should appear in close proximity to the comparative claim:
- 6.2.1 The amount of difference related to the same quantity, expressed as a percentage, fraction, or an absolute amount. Full details of the comparison should be given
 - 6.2.2 The identity of the food(s) to which the food is being compared. The food(s) should be described in such a manner that it (they) can be readily identified by consumers.
- 6.3 The comparison should be based on a relative difference of at least 25% in the energy value or nutrient content, except for micronutrients where a 10% difference in the NRV would be acceptable, between the compared foods and a minimum absolute difference in the energy value or nutrient content equivalent to the figure defined as "low" or as a "source" in the Table to these Guidelines¹.
- 6.4 The use of the word "light" should follow the same criteria as for "reduced" and include an indication of the characteristics which make the food "light".

7 **NUTRIENT FUNCTION CLAIMS**

Claims relating to the function of a nutrient in the body should be permitted provided the following conditions are fulfilled:

- 7.1 Only those essential nutrients for which a Nutrient Reference Value (NRV) has been established in the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling or those nutrients which are mentioned in officially recognized dietary guidelines of the national authority having jurisdiction, should be the subject of a nutrient function claim;
- 7.2 The food for which the claim is made should be a significant source of the nutrient in the diet;
- 7.3 The nutrient function claim should be based on the scientific consensus which is supported by the competent authority.
- 7.4 The claim should not imply or include any statement to the effect that the nutrient would afford a cure or treatment for or protection from disease;

8 **CLAIMS RELATED TO DIETARY GUIDELINES OR HEALTHY DIETS**

Claims that relate to dietary guidelines or "healthy diets" should be permitted subject to the following conditions:

- 8.1 Only claims related to the pattern of eating contained in dietary guidelines officially recognized by the appropriate national authority.
- 8.2 Flexibility in the wording of claims is acceptable, provided the claims remain faithful to the pattern of eating outlined in the dietary guidelines.
- 8.3 Claims related to a "healthy diet" or any synonymous term are considered to be claims about the pattern of eating contained in dietary guidelines and should be consistent with the guidelines.

- 8.4 Foods which are described as part of a healthy diet, healthy balance, etc., should not be based on selective consideration of one or more aspects of the food. They should satisfy certain minimum criteria for other major nutrients related to dietary guidelines.
- 8.5 Foods should not be described as "healthy" or be represented in a manner that implies that a food in and of itself will impart health.
- 8.6 Foods may be described as part of a "healthy diet" provided that the label carries a statement relating the food to the pattern of eating described in the dietary guidelines.

TABLE OF CONDITIONS FOR NUTRIENT CONTENTS

COMPONENT	CLAIM	CONDITIONS
NOT MORE THAN		
Energy	Low	40 kcal (170 kJ) per 100 g (solids) or 20 kcal (80 kJ) per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	4 kcal per 100 ml (liquids)
Fat	Low	3g per 100 g (solids) 1.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.5 g per 100 g (solids) or 100 ml (liquids)
Saturated Fat	Low ³	1.5 g per 100 g (solids) 0.75 g per 100 ml (liquids) and 10% of energy
	Free	0.1 g per 100 g (solids) 0.1 g per 100 ml (liquids)
Cholesterol	Low ³	0.02 g per 100 g (solids) 0.01 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.005 g per 100 g (solids) 0.005 g per 100 ml (liquids) and, for both claims, less than: 1.5 g saturated fat per 100 g (solids) 0.75 g saturated fat per 100 ml (liquids) and 10% of energy of saturated fat
Sugars	Free	0.5 g per 100 g (solids) 0.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
Sodium	Low	0.12 g per 100 g
	Very Low	0.04 g per 100 g
	Free	0.005 g per 100 g

³ In the case of the claim for "low in saturated fat", trans fatty acids should be taken into account where applicable. This provision consequentially applies to foods claimed to be "low in cholesterol" and "cholesterol free".

Protein	Source	10% of NRV per 100 g (solids) 5% of NRV per 100 ml (liquids) or 5% of NRV per 100 kcal (12% of NRV per 1 MJ) or 10% of NRV per serving
	High	2 times the values for "source"
Vitamins and Minerals	Source	15% of NRV per 100 g (solids) 7.5% of NRV per 100 ml (liquids) or 5% of NRV per 100 kcal (12% of NRV per 1 MJ) or 15% of NRV per serving
	High	2 times the values for "source"