

FoodDrinkEurope's opposition towards a front-of-pack nutrition label

September 29, 2021

Scientific studies prove: Nutrition labels on the front of the package highlighted in traffic light colours are the most understandable.¹ They can help people shop more healthily.² However, the introduction of an obligatory traffic light system throughout Europe failed in 2010 due to massive resistance from the food industry. According to FoodDrinkEurope (then called CIAA) companies invested up to one billion euro in the fight against a mandatory colour-coded nutritional information.³ In 2017, the Nutri-Score was developed in France and has been on the advance in Europe. In addition to France, the model is or will be recommended as a voluntary labelling scheme in Belgium, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and other countries are considering following suit.

In recent years, FoodDrinkEurope has continued to lobby against a mandatory introduction of Nutri-Score at EU level:

Feedback from FoodDrinkEurope to EU Commission initiative "Facilitating healthier food choices – establishing nutrient profiles", January 2021⁴:

FoodDrinkEurope asks the European Commission to:

- "Include and assess an additional FOPNL option, which combines numerical information on the energy value and on the content of specific nutrients with synthetic appreciation of the products' overall nutritional value (e.g. the Health Star Rating labelling system)."
- "Investigate both mandatory and voluntary options for every FOPNL scheme (...) to avoid unintentional consequences for existing/alternative nutrition-related schemes which are currently on the market, such as the Nordic Keyhole scheme, the Danish Wholegrain Logo, the Finnish Heart Logo, etc."
- "Overall, FoodDrinkEurope favours voluntary FOPNL within a tight(er) defined EU harmonized framework."
- "Portion-based approaches must be considered for each FOPNL option"

FoodDrinkEurope repeatedly criticized countries that have introduced colour-coded labels:

FoodDrinkEurope preliminary contribution to EU 'Farm to Fork' Strategy on Sustainable Food, March 2020:

"Avoid further fragmentation of the Single Market in the area of food information to consumers, by pushing back against unjustified/harmful national initiatives and/or by supporting pro-active harmonised EU action (e.g. on the harmonisation of front-of-pack nutrition labelling, fully compliant with Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 1169/2011)."⁵

¹ <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/10/10/1542/htm>

² https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_etiquetage_nutritionnel_version_anglaise.pdf

³ <https://www.politico.eu/article/fear-of-information-overload-ahead-of-food-labelling-vote/>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12748-Facilitating-healthier-food-choices-establishing-nutrient-profiles/F1466420_en

⁵ https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications_documents/FoodDrinkEurope_preliminary_contribution_to_F2F_Strategy_on_Sustainable_Food_%28March_2020%29.pdf

FoodDrinkEurope Annual Report 2019:

“(…) national initiatives – notably in the UK and France – (…) fragment the EU Single Market and are prone to create confusion for European consumers”⁶

Reaction to first joint EU meeting on front-of-pack nutritional labelling, April 2018:

“According to FoodDrinkEurope, who said last week that it welcomed the meeting, the food and drink industry in the bloc has long been calling for a coordinated approach to FOP nutrition labelling. It added that national initiatives, such as the traffic light system in the UK and France’s Nutri-Score, had fragmented the EU Single Market and were prone to create confusion for European consumers.”⁷

FoodDrinkEurope stresses that it favours a voluntary approach:

EU Farm to Fork Strategy Reaction May 2020:

“A clear political roadmap is needed to align all stakeholders towards a single, harmonised, and voluntary front of pack nutrition labelling scheme that will help empower consumers to choose a varied and balanced diet.”⁸

Furthermore, the industry association warns of a discrimination of certain foods:

EU Promotion Policy Position paper, June 2021:

“There should be no discrimination of products on the basis of their nutritional content: all farm, food and drink products can be part of a healthy diet when consumed in moderation.”⁹

“Let’s step up to the plate – Europe’s Food and Drink Industry Priorities for the EU Institutions 2019-2024”:

“FoodDrinkEurope supports a comprehensive, co-ordinated and inclusive EU nutrition and health policy, based on solid science and evidence, which respects individual foods and ingredients.”¹⁰

⁶ https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications_documents/FDE_2019_AR_interactive.pdf

⁷ <https://www.newfoodmagazine.com/news/66459/eu-nutritional-labelling/>

⁸ https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications_documents/FoodDrinkEurope_reaction_paper_-_EU_Farm_to_Fork_Strategy.pdf

⁹ <https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FoodDrinkEurope-position-Promotion-Policy.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications_documents/StepUpToThePlate_FDE_0208_%281%29.pdf