

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1 WELCOME (5 MINS)

- Explain purpose of group – topic is food shopping and food labels
- Own opinions, no right or wrong answers, no hidden agendas
- Mix of written activities and discussion
- Only 'rule' is one person to speak at a time
- Housekeeping issues – toilets, mobile phones off, refreshments, confidentiality & taping, client viewing (if applicable)

2 ROUND TABLE INTRODUCTIONS (5 MINS)

- Name, describe household that you shop for, favourite food & why

3 FAMILIARITY WITH NUTRITION CONTENT CLAIMS

3.1 SPONTANEOUS FAMILIARITY (5 MINS)

WRITTEN TASK 1 (Hand out sheet 1)

I mentioned that the topic for today's discussion was food labels. There are many different types of food labels; the ones that I want to focus on tonight are nutrition content claims. These are statements on the front on food packages like 'low in salt', 'low fat' etc.

- Using the sheet in front of you, please write down all the nutrition content claims that you can think of – ones that you have seen in the supermarket, or used to select a product yourself. Beside the claim, write the food category or product that you have seen the claim on.

[Moderator collect sheets.]

3.2 PROMPTED FAMILIARITY (SHOWBOARDS) (8 MINS)

WRITTEN TASK 2 (Hand out Sheet 2)

- Instructions - Explain that some claims are quite similar, and so we group them together under a concept heading, such as "Free = fat free, sugar free.
- I'm going to show you 8 types of nutrition content claims, some of which you've already mentioned. Please use the sheet in front of you to rate each of the 8 types of claims in terms of whether you have seen and used each them, and how much you trust each type of claim, and how useful you think it is, if at all.

4 UNDERSTANDING, & USE OF 8 SPECIFIED CLAIMS (35 MINS)

**In each group, cover either 4.1-4.4 or 4.5-4.8 (ie 4 claims per group).
Use appropriate food products as examples.**

4.1 COMPARATIVE CLAIMS (Refer to Showboard 1) (10 mins)

- Are they used? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Which ones in particular are preferred or more useful? For which products?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What is it saying about the product? (refer to real product examples) What sorts of things do participants infer from comparative claims?
- WORD SORT EXERCISE. As a group, sort the terms in order from 'least' to 'most' – words can be ordered individually, or some can be grouped if they are viewed as the same thing/similar. Through the exercise, or as follow up ascertain what the differences between the terms are - how similar or different are they?
- Is there anything confusing or misleading about these claims?
- These claims are always compared to a reference food (eg trim/hi lo milk would be compared to standard milk). How much difference – what % - would participants expect when they see 'reduced' and 'increased'?
- You can tell how these claims compare to a reference food by looking at the Nutrition Information Panel (refer to milk example).
 - Have you ever looked at this?
 - Do you think it's beneficial?
 - How would it be of assistance?

4.2 FREE (refer to Showboard 2) (10 mins)

- Are they used? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Which ones in particular are preferred or more useful? For which products?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What does 'free mean? What is it saying about the product? (refer to real product examples) [PROBE for whether free means 'zero content' or 'very very low']
- Is there anything confusing or misleading about these claims?
- What is an acceptable amount of the nutrient/component that should be permitted under the 'free' claim? Zero for all nutrients/food components or are trace amounts of some nutrients/components acceptable?
[After this point has been explored fully, clarify if necessary that the difference is one of absolute absence vs nutritional insignificance. Is it ok to have different 'amounts' for different nutrients, or should the same rule apply to all nutrients eg sugar free gum]
- If free = zero amount is preferred, what other term could be used to describe trace amounts of a nutrient which are nutritionally insignificant? Would 'very low in sugar' instead of 'sugar free' be acceptable? What about 'trace of sugar' or 'sugar – virtually nil'?
- Explain that manufacturers that make any nutrition claim are required to declare the actual amount of the nutrient in the NIP (use product examples to explain this). What do you think of having a 'free' claim when there is a small amount stated in the NIP? Is this ok?
- [Ascertain for analysis whether participants view this requirement as a legitimate disclaimer (to assist consumers) or whether it is viewed more as a tool for 'catching' manufacturers out. Does it matter?]

4.3 % FAT FREE (Refer to Showboard 3) (10 mins)

- Are they used? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Which ones in particular are preferred or more useful? For which products?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What does '97% free mean? What about 96%? 94%? What is it saying about the product? (refer to real product examples) [PROBE to ascertain whether participants understand that 94% fat free means the product is 6% fat – had they thought this reverse %before? PROBE also to ascertain whether %fat free = low fat or reduced fat or lite or diet – is that for all products or does it depend on the % and/or the product? Get examples]
- At what percentage level is a product no longer 'low fat'?
- Should manufacturers be able to use any %fat free claim? (eg 70% fat free? 50% fat free?) When does the product become medium and high fat?
- Should there be restrictions on % fat free to ensure that %fat free claims are only on low fat foods?
- Is there anything confusing or misleading about these claims?
- Would a disclaimer, such as 'this is a low fat food' printed in conjunction with a % fat free claim be of any benefit? How and why? Does 'low fat food' mean more to participants than % fat free? Is one more useful than the other, is there a preference?

4.4 CARBOHYDRATE & PROTEIN CLAIMS (Refer to Showboard 4) (5 mins)

- Has anyone used these claims? Why? For what reasons?
- What is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- If not used – Who do you think would use these claims?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? Refer to each of the three types.
- Do you think we need claims about carbohydrates? If yes, what sorts of words should we have (high, low, source of, good source of?) - should we have all of them / some of them or just one?
- Is there anything confusing or misleading about these claims?

4.5 CHOLESTEROL (Refer to Showboard 5) (10 mins)

- Are you interested in cholesterol information in foods? Is this a need that you have? [ascertain relative level of interest/need]
- Are these claims used? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Which ones in particular are preferred or more useful? For which products?
- What does this type of claim mean to you?
- What do you know about cholesterol? PROMPT for difference between dietary cholesterol (cholesterol found only in animal foods – not present in vegetable foods) and blood cholesterol.
- Check for knowledge of terms fat and saturated. What do you think is more important for maintaining a healthy diet – cholesterol, fat or saturated fat intake? And what about for protecting against coronary heart disease?
- Do you think product labels should contain information about cholesterol? If yes, which of these three claims are most/least important, or are they the same?
- Devils advocate question – *doctors are now more concerned about saturated fat than cholesterol, when it comes to reducing heart disease*. What do you think of the idea of prohibiting cholesterol claims on foods, so as to simply things for consumers – ie they only need to focus on fat claims? Is this a good idea or a bad one? Why?

4.6 NO ADDED SUGAR / UNSWEETENED/NO ADDED SALT/SODIUM (Refer to Showboard 6a) (10 mins)

- Do you look for these claims? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Which ones in particular are preferred or more useful? For which products?
- How are they used? To make what decisions? What role do they play in choosing whether or not to buy a product? How important are they? Important in what way?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What is each one saying about the product?
- Do you trust all of these claims, or just some? (trust absolutely vs trust 'fairly well') Why? Which claims (if any) don't you trust? Why not? [be careful to distinguish between distrusting/trusting the claim (no matter what the product) vs distrusting the manufacturer and therefore dismissing the claim]
- Is the claim used on its own, or is other nutrition information on the label used in conjunction with the claim – what other information? How? (for example is the NIP or the Ingredients List used to verify

the claim? Is the NIP used to find out exactly how much sugar/salt is in the product? Is the Ingredients list referred to find out what type of sugar is in the product?

[Do participants understand that the claim refers to the level of sugar or salt only, not the overall nutritional value of a food? Probe indirectly for the notion of a fat/sugar/fibre trade off – do participants worry if the food has no added sugar that it may be high in fat, or vice versa? Does the concept of nutrient trade offs come up at all?] Do they know it can contain naturally occurring sugars?

- Disclaimers (refer to Showboard 6b) – is there any benefit in including a 'disclaimer' beside the 'no added' and 'unsweetened' claims that provides more information eg: Where the claim says 'no added sugar/salt' the disclaimer would say
 - *'See Nutrition Information Panel on back'; or*
 - *'Contains natural sugar(s)' or 'Contains natural salt'; or*
 - *Contains natural sugar(s) – see panel on back' or 'Contains natural salt –see panel on back'*

Which is preferred? [seek agreement on preferred disclaimer statement].

- A disclaimer on a package adds even more visual stimuli and there's a lot on products already and in the supermarkets in general. Do you think people would notice / pay attention to it? Is it really necessary?
- If there was such a disclaimer (refer to preferred disclaimer above), do you think the size of the wording is important? If so, how big would the wording need to be for you to see it or trust it? [Refer to product examples to find an acceptable font size and note for analysis]. Should it be as big as the claim itself, bigger or smaller? (half the size? Twice as big?)
- How to other terms such as 'in clear fruit juice', 'in lite juice', 'in real juice', 'in natural juice' compare to the 'no added sugar' claim? Do they mean the same thing? How are they different?

4.7 LITE / LIGHT (Refer to Showboard 7a) (10 mins)

- Do you look for these claims? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims? For which products?
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What is it saying about the product? (PROBE for whether it refers to colour, fat, salt, sugar content or anything else)
- Is there a preference for one spelling over another? Does lite infer anything different to light?
- How are these claims used? To make what decisions? What role do they play in choosing whether or not to buy a product? How important are they? Important in what way? Think more broadly than supermarket shopping – delis? Service station shops? Vending machines? Canteens and cafes?
- Disclaimers (refer to Showboard 7b) – is there any benefit in including a 'disclaimer' beside the 'lite' claim that provides more information eg: Where the claim says 'lite' the disclaimer would say
 - *'lite in energy'* or *'lite in fat'*; or
 - *'lite in colour'*

Which are necessary or preferred?

- If there was such a disclaimer (refer to preferred disclaimers above), do you think the size of the wording is important? If so, how big would the wording need to be for you to see it or trust it? [Refer to product examples to find an acceptable font size and note for analysis].

4.8 DIET (Refer to Showboard 8b) (5 mins)

- Do you look for these claims? Why – what is most useful/helpful about these types of claims?
- Do you have any concerns about the diet claim? PROBE for detail
- What does this type of claim mean to you? What is it saying about the product?
- How is this claim different to other terms such as:
 - Low fat
 - Low calorie
 - Reduced fat
 - Reduced calorie
 - Lite
 - Free

5 DISQUALIFYING CRITERIA (10 MINS)

Address each point to the extent to which it has not already been covered.

We've talked quite a bit about clarifying statements that could be added to different claims to provide clarification or more information. This may be necessary to give you more information about the overall nutritional value of a food – where the claim implies a nutritional benefit, but the overall food may not be as healthy as you would like.

Another approach is to disallow manufacturers to make claims if the product is unhealthy in another way – in other words to disqualify manufacturers from making nutrition content claims where the claim may confuse people into thinking the product is healthier than it really is. For example, a manufacturer would not be allowed to claim a product was 'high in fibre' if it also contained a lot of fat. Or, a manufacturer would not be able to claim a product was 'low in fat' if it also contained a lot of sugar or salt.

- What do you think of this idea of 'disqualifying' manufacturers from using nutrition content claims in these sorts of circumstances? Is it a good idea? Is it necessary? Why? Would it change anything for consumers? Is it fair to manufacturers?
- What are the advantages of this approach? What are the disadvantages? (if necessary prompt with things like having disqualifying criteria would greatly reduce the number of nutrition content claims on products, and would therefore give them much less quick & easy nutrition information, or that there are some people who are only interested in particular nutrients for health reasons, and would lose access to this information in a quick & easy format).
- Are there any claims that would need this type of qualification, or should it be something that applies to all claims or no claims? Why?
- What sort of criteria should be applied?
- Here are two ideas, do you agree or disagree with these? Why?
 - The disqualification criteria apply to nutrients that relate to the claimed nutrient (eg a manufacturer can't claim 'low fat' without the product being low in saturated fat (as opposed to other types of less harmful fats);
 - The disqualification criteria apply to nutrients that don't appear to relate to the claimed nutrient (eg a manufacturer can't claim 'low salt' without limiting, say, the fat content as well). In this example, do you think the 'low salt' product should be low fat,

or just have a limited amount of fat, so as to ensure it is not high in fat?

- What do you think of the idea of putting these sorts of restrictions on manufacturers? PROBE on concerns, and what is driving the concern – too much regulation?, not fair for manufacturers? too much information which becomes confusing for consumers? etc.

6 GENERAL USE OF NUTRITION CONTENT CLAIMS 12 MINS

Ask to the extent that these points have not been addressed earlier, or to clarify. Establish if there are differences between claims, or if they are used in the same way, overall:

- What decision is the claim being used for – what products? To choose a product quickly? To identify a known or favourite product easily? To choose between products? To make the final decision or to narrow the field of choice? To avoid a particular product or ingredient? For particular family members? Children vs adults?
- **What role or place does health and nutrition play in consumers' use of these claims? Is it the primary motivator for using the claim? What health issues or health needs?**
- Is the claim used on its own, or is other nutrition information on the label used in conjunction with the claim – what other information? How? (for example is the NIP or the Ingredients List used to verify the claim? Is the NIP used to find out the whole product nutritional value, in context of the claim, or to see if there are any nutrient trade-offs in the product eg if a product claims to be 'low in fat' is it also high in sugar or salt?
[Do participants understand that the claim refers to the level of a specific nutrient, not the overall nutritional value of a food? – do not ask as a direct question, what can be inferred from the above points?]
- For very health conscious consumers – how are the claims used in the context of assessing the overall nutritional value of a product?

7 ADEQUACY OF CLAIMS**(10 MINS)**

- What is the overall value placed on nutrition content claims? Do they assist consumers to make product choices, or are they more a hindrance? Are claims useful/not?
- Are any claims confusing? Which? In what way?
- Are any claims misleading? Which? In what way?
- Which claims can you trust? (trust absolutely vs trust 'fairly well') Why? Which claims (if any) don't you trust? Why not? [be careful to distinguish between distrusting/trusting the claim (no matter what the product) vs distrusting the manufacturer and therefore dismissing the claim]
- If low trust/very misleading perceptions – Why don't you or people like you complain? Devil's advocate comment – *"Manufacturers say that they get very few complaints about nutrition content claims, therefore consumers must find them easy to use, and trustworthy"*.
- **Are there too many claims on products (or not enough?) Should there be more? Does more claims = more useful information, or more confusion?**
- Could nutrition content claims be improved in any way for use by consumers?

THANK AND CLOSE

Mention the value of their input, that their comments will be used to shape the directions of food labelling in Australia and New Zealand!

HAND OUT INCENTIVES (\$50/\$40)