

Review of nutrition labelling for added sugars

June 2021

Executive summary

From 2017 to 2019 the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) undertook policy development work regarding sugar labelling. The desired outcome of the work as agreed by Food Ministers was that:

Food labels provide adequate contextual information about sugars to enable consumers to make informed choices in support of the dietary guidelines.

FRSC prepared a Consultation Regulation Impact Statement on the labelling of sugars on packaged foods and drinks and undertook public consultation in 2018. Taking into account submitter comments, in June 2019 FRSC completed the *Policy paper: Labelling of sugars on packaged foods and drinks*.

In August 2019, when considering the policy paper, Ministers agreed to request Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to review nutrition labelling for added sugars, noting the option of quantifying added sugars in the nutrition information panel (NIP) best met the desired outcome. Furthermore, Ministers agreed *that a pictorial about sugar applied to sugary beverages/sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) warranted further consideration along with other options* (subsequently clarified to mean the option of changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients) *pending the response to the Health Star Rating five-year review*.

The *Policy Guideline on Food Labelling to Support Consumers to Make Informed Healthy Food Choices* (policy guideline), endorsed by Food Ministers in August 2020, is relevant to the review.

In response to the request from Ministers, we have reviewed nutrition labelling for added sugars, giving consideration to the preferred policy option of including added sugars in the NIP as well as the other options of a pictorial about sugar applied to SSBs and changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients. In particular, the review considered technical matters associated with including added sugars in the NIP.

In October and November 2020, FSANZ undertook targeted consultation meetings with key representatives from the food industry, public health groups, jurisdictions and government public health agencies. The focus of these discussions was on technical issues associated with quantifying added sugars in the NIP. FSANZ also consulted with the Australian and New Zealand Beverage Councils in October 2020 on technical issues and again in April 2021 specifically about implementation of the Health Star Rating (HSR) System across the non-alcoholic beverage sector.

Added sugars quantified in the NIP

While considering technical matters associated with including added sugars in the NIP is likely to be complex, we have not identified any technical impediments to implementing this option. Given Ministers agreed from the policy work that including added sugars in the NIP best met the desired outcome and we have not identified any technical impediments, FSANZ intends to prepare a proposal to consider amending the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) with regard to added sugars information in the NIP.

In accordance with the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (the FSANZ Act), when proposing a change to the Code, FSANZ must make its own assessment based on the best available scientific evidence and having regard to a number of matters including

consideration of costs and benefits (section 59), FSANZ objectives (subsection 18(1)) and other matters set out in subsection 18(2) of the FSANZ Act.

Pictorial about sugar applied to sugary beverages/sugar-sweetened beverages

Australian and New Zealand governments are promoting the use of the HSR System to support industry in meeting the uptake target of 70% of intended products by the end of 2025. In addition, the Australian and New Zealand Beverage Councils have indicated they are committed to supporting the use of the HSR stars graphic by their members. Applying a pictorial about sugar on SSBs has the potential to clearly convey the significant contribution these foods make to the consumption of added/total sugars. However, consideration of an additional or alternative interpretive labelling scheme for SSBs at a time when governments are promoting HSR uptake and the non-alcoholic beverage sector is encouraging members to use the HSR System, may not be appropriate.

FSANZ therefore recommends no further work on this option is undertaken while HSR implementation is being broadly supported by governments, noting HSR use by the non-alcoholic beverage sector will be monitored as part of the overall government monitoring programme for the HSR System.

Changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients

The 2019 FRSC policy paper found changing the statement of ingredients would offer the least net benefit from a high level qualitative assessment. FSANZ's 2016 technical evaluation for Recommendation 12 from the Labelling Review also noted limitations of the option and industry concerns with implementation.

Taking into account the outcomes from both the 2016 and 2019 evaluations and having regard to the policy guideline, FSANZ recommends no further work is undertaken on this option, as it does not meet the desired outcome.

Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 POLICY DEVELOPMENT.....	4
1.2 MINISTERS' REQUEST.....	5
1.3 POLICY GUIDELINE ON FOOD LABELLING TO SUPPORT CONSUMERS TO MAKE INFORMED HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES	5
1.4 SUGAR LABELLING IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND	6
1.4.1 <i>Labelling requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code</i>	6
1.4.2 <i>Health Star Rating System</i>	6
2 REVIEW OBJECTIVES AND TARGETED CONSULTATION	7
3 OPTIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM	7
3.1 ADDED SUGARS QUANTIFIED IN THE NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL.....	7
3.1.1 <i>Description and rationale</i>	7
3.1.2 <i>Definition of added sugars</i>	7
3.1.3 <i>Quantification of added sugars</i>	13
3.1.4 <i>Foods in scope</i>	13
3.1.5 <i>Labelling of pure/single ingredient products for sale</i>	14
3.1.6 <i>Thresholds</i>	14
3.1.7 <i>Conclusion</i>	15
3.2 PICTORIAL ABOUT SUGAR APPLIED TO SUGARY BEVERAGES/SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES	15
3.2.1 <i>Background</i>	15
3.2.2 <i>Health Star Rating System five-year review</i>	16
3.2.3 <i>Conclusion</i>	17
3.3 CHANGING THE STATEMENT OF INGREDIENTS TO IDENTIFY SUGARS-BASED INGREDIENTS	18
3.3.1 <i>Background</i>	18
3.3.2 <i>Evaluation of the statement of ingredients option in the 2019 policy paper</i>	18
3.3.3 <i>Dietary guidelines and the policy guideline</i>	19
3.3.4 <i>Sugars-based ingredient labelling in Canada</i>	20
3.3.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	20
REFERENCES	22
APPENDIX	23
APPENDIX 1: CODE DEFINITIONS AND CLAIM REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO SUGAR(S).....	23

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy development

From 2017 to 2019 the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) undertook policy development work regarding sugar labelling. For this work the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Forum) (now known as the Food Ministers' Meeting) agreed to the following problem statement:

Information about sugar provided on food labels in Australia and New Zealand does not provide adequate contextual information to enable consumers to make informed choices in support of dietary guidelines.

The desired outcome of that work as agreed to by Ministers was that:

Food labels provide adequate contextual information about sugars to enable consumers to make informed choices in support of the dietary guidelines.

FRSC prepared a Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (CRIS)¹ on the labelling of sugars on packaged foods and drinks and undertook public consultation in 2018. Taking into account submitter comments, in June 2019 FRSC completed the *Policy paper: Labelling of sugars on packaged foods and drinks*¹ which included an evaluation of the following seven options for addressing the problem:

1. Status quo
2. Education on how to read and interpret labelling information about sugars
3. Changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients
4. Added sugars quantified in the nutrition information panel (NIP)
5. Advisory labels for foods high in added sugar
6. Pictorial display of the amount of sugars and/or added sugars in a serving of food
7. Digital linking to off label web-based information about added sugars content.

A high level qualitative analysis of the benefits and impacts was undertaken for three options that were considered to be feasible (options 3, 4 and 6). The outcome of the assessment was that option 4 had the greatest potential as it best met the desired outcome and provided a positive net benefit. It was considered costs associated with option 4 would be minimised as it draws on an existing mandatory labelling element (i.e. the NIP) and is unlikely to necessitate major label redesign costs for industry or confuse consumers by overly emphasising added sugars over other nutrients of concern to health.

Although not specifically considered by FRSC in the CRIS, FRSC concluded from the assessment that applying option 6 only to sugary beverages/sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) warranted further consideration given it would provide easy to understand information for consumers, encourage reformulation, support other public health activities and promote healthy food choices in line with dietary guidelines. It was considered however, the approach would impact label space and label design.

FRSC also considered whether combining option 4 with any of the other feasible options could further enhance option 4 in meeting the desired outcome. While combining option 4 with option 3 was not seen to enhance option 4, combining option 4 with option 6 if it was applied only to SSBs was considered to have the potential to improve consumer

¹ [FRSC 2018 Consultation Regulation Impact Statement and 2019 policy paper](#)

understanding and increase access to sugars information for consumers with low literacy skills.

1.2 Ministers' request

In August 2019, when considering the FRSC Policy paper, Ministers agreed to request Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to review nutrition labelling for added sugars, noting the option of quantifying added sugars in the NIP best met the desired outcome². Furthermore, Ministers agreed *that a pictorial approach applied to sugary beverages / sugar-sweetened beverages warrants further consideration, along with other options, pending the response to the Health Star Rating five-year review*. Ministers also agreed that *any label changes that may result should be accompanied by education to support consumers to understand sugars labelling and make informed healthy choices*.

Following the August 2019 Ministers' meeting, FSANZ clarified with the Department of Health that the reference to 'other options' was specifically the option of changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients.

1.3 Policy guideline on food labelling to support consumers to make informed healthy food choices

The *Policy Guideline on Food Labelling to Support Consumers to Make Informed Healthy Food Choices*³ (policy guideline) was endorsed by Food Ministers in August 2020. In reviewing or developing food regulatory measures, FSANZ is required to have regard to ministerial policy guidance.

The overall aim of the policy guideline is that Ministers expect *food labels to provide adequate information to enable consumers to make informed food choices to support healthy dietary patterns recommended in the Dietary Guidelines*. The policy guideline recognises however, that food labels provide information about a specific food and its nutrients while Dietary Guidelines provide whole-of-diet recommendations about food groups and dietary patterns. Dietary Guidelines also make recommendations about foods based on the nutrients they contain (e.g. added sugars, saturated fat).

The policy principles particularly relevant to the added sugars work are:

- *Food labels should provide adequate information to enable consumers to identify foods that do and do not contribute to healthy dietary patterns recommended in the Dietary Guidelines (and consumers should not be required to access this information online).*
- *Information that enables consumers to identify foods that contribute to healthy dietary patterns recommended in the Dietary Guidelines is a public health priority and therefore sits towards the mandatory end of the 'dominant mode of intervention' within the preventative health section of the Food Labelling Hierarchy.*
- *Information that supports consumers to apply the recommendations in Dietary Guidelines should be provided on food labels in a format which:*
 - *is easily accessed and understood by consumers;*
 - *supports consumers to manage energy intakes to assist with achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight;*
 - *supports consumers to compare foods;*
 - *does not promote consumption of foods inconsistent with Dietary Guidelines*

² [Forum's August 2019 communique](#)

³ [Policy Guideline on Food Labelling to Support Consumers to Make Informed Healthy Food Choices](#)

- (such as those high in saturated fat, added sugars, added salt and or foods with little or no nutritional value); and*
- *takes into account the nutritional content of the whole food, particularly risk nutrients identified in the Dietary Guidelines, so as not to mislead the consumer.*

There are references to the need for education both in relation to the dietary guidelines to support consumer understanding and use of food labelling (page 3) and to inform consumers about new food labelling requirements (page 4).

1.4 Sugar labelling in Australia and New Zealand

1.4.1 Labelling requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code

Standard 1.2.8 – Nutrition Information Requirements, of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code⁴ (the Code) requires most packaged foods for retail sale to display an NIP which includes the total quantity of sugars. For NIP declarations, ‘sugars’ is defined as ‘monosaccharides and disaccharides’ (see Standard 1.1.2 – Definitions used throughout the Code, and Appendix 1 to this report). There are also conditions for claims about sugar(s) including ‘no added sugars’ and ‘unsweetened’ claims in Schedule 4 of the Code (see Appendix 1 for details).

Standard 1.2.4 – Information requirements – statement of ingredients, sets out the general requirements for providing a statement of ingredients. A statement of ingredients must be provided on most packaged foods (with some exceptions) and must list each ingredient in the food for sale (with exceptions for certain ingredients, such as processing aids). Each ingredient must be listed in descending order of ingoing weight and identified using any of the following:

- a name by which the ingredient is commonly known, or
- a name that describes the true nature of the ingredient, or
- a generic name for the ingredient that is specified in Schedule 10 in accordance with any conditions specified in that Schedule.

In relation to sugar, the generic name ‘sugar’ is permitted to be used for various forms of sucrose (see Appendix 1 for details). The generic name ‘sugars’ is not permitted.

1.4.2 Health Star Rating System

The Health Star Rating (HSR) System is a voluntary front-of-pack labelling scheme supported by both Australian and New Zealand governments that rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns a rating from 0.5 to 5 stars.

The total sugar content of foods is used in the HSR algorithm for the calculation of star ratings. The total sugar content can be displayed in a nutrient icon as part of the HSR graphic.

A five-year review of the HSR System was completed in 2019 and review recommendations agreed by Ministers in July 2020, with a two year implementation period for changes to the algorithm commencing on 15 November 2020. An additional issue relating to non-dairy beverages was finalised in February 2021⁵. The HSR review report includes a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of using added sugars instead of total sugars in the calculator. The FRSC policy work on added sugars labelling underway at the time was noted and it was suggested that if Ministers decided added sugars should be quantified in the NIP,

⁴ [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#)

⁵ [Health Star Rating five-year review documents](#)

then a future review of the HSR System should consider including added sugars in the calculator using the definition that would be in the Code.

Details about the HSR System review outcomes relevant to FSANZ's consideration of applying a pictorial about sugar to SSBs are given in section 3.2.2.

2 Review objectives and targeted consultation

The main objective of this review was to consider the three policy options for added sugars labelling, as specified by Ministers, with a particular focus on technical matters, before deciding whether or not a proposal should be prepared to consider amending the Code with regard to added sugars labelling.

In October and November 2020, FSANZ undertook targeted consultation meetings with key representatives from the food industry, public health groups, jurisdictions and government public health agencies. The focus of these discussions was on technical issues associated with quantifying added sugars in the NIP. Stakeholder views from these meetings are included in the following section. A follow-up meeting with jurisdictions was held in April 2021 to primarily discuss the option to apply a pictorial about sugar to SSBs.

FSANZ also consulted with the Australian and New Zealand Beverage Councils in October 2020 on technical issues and again in April 2021 specifically about implementation of the HSR System across the non-alcoholic beverage sector.

3 Options for addressing the problem

3.1 Added sugars quantified in the nutrition information panel

3.1.1 Description and rationale

As detailed in the 2019 policy paper, this option is about quantifying a food's added sugars content in the NIP. The aim of this option is to address the problem by providing contextual information to enable consumers to identify foods containing added sugars, compare products to identify those which are lower in added sugars, and use this information to make informed choices in support of dietary guidelines.

The 2019 policy paper noted that added sugars information in the NIP could be enhanced with additional contextual information, such as HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW messaging in relation to the product's added sugars content or using percent Daily Intake (%DI) labelling for added sugars (noting cut-offs for HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW or a daily intake reference value for added sugars, respectively, would need to be established).

3.1.2 Definition of added sugars

There is no agreed definition of 'added sugars' in Australia and New Zealand. The issue of what particular types of sugars would be 'added sugars' was not considered in the 2019 policy paper, as this was a technical detail relating to implementation that did not impact the policy options being proposed or the analysis of those options. It was recommended FSANZ consider implementation and technical issues such as which sugars are considered to be 'added sugars' when reviewing nutrition labelling for added sugars.

To date we have identified some relevant aspects that would be considered in developing a definition of 'added sugars' for the purposes of nutrition labelling (as outlined below), however we are not proposing a specific definition at this stage. A definition would be developed taking into account section 18 objectives of the *Food Standards Australia New*

*Zealand Act 1991*⁶ (the FSANZ Act), stakeholder views, modelling of ‘added sugars’ values using different definitions and practicalities associated with implementation and ease of quantification. The contribution of various foods (such as fruit products) to overall sugar intake could also be taken into account. We note consequential impacts on other provisions in the Code such as ‘no added sugar’ claim conditions, would need to be considered, subject to the final definition.

Existing provisions in the Code have been taken into account in our preliminary consideration of a definition of added sugars. As outlined in section 1.4.1 above, ‘sugars’ is defined for the purposes of nutrition labelling as ‘monosaccharides and disaccharides’ and there are also conditions for ‘no added sugar’ claims (see Appendix 1 for full definitions and claim conditions). ‘No added sugar’ claims are not permitted on foods that contain added ‘sugars’ (monosaccharides and disaccharides), honey, malt or malt extracts, or concentrated or deionised fruit juice, with exceptions for some beverages. These conditions were developed under Proposal P293 – Nutrition, health and related claims⁷, which included three rounds of public consultation. The conditions were developed on the basis that ingredients used for sweetening purposes should not be in a food where the ‘no added sugar’ claim is made. Additionally, at that time, FSANZ considered the nutrient composition of dried fruit to be significantly different to concentrated fruit juice due to the fibre content and therefore dried fruit was permitted to be present in products with a ‘no added sugar’ claim.

3.1.2.1 Dietary guidelines

Dietary guidelines in both Australia and New Zealand refer to ‘added sugars’ and guidelines in New Zealand for certain age groups also include recommendations for ‘sugars’ and ‘free sugars’.

The dietary guidelines provide evidence-based recommendations for healthy dietary patterns and as such, do not provide a precise definition or description of ‘added sugars’ that is appropriate to be used as a definition for regulatory purposes. Guidelines and information from the various guideline documents and educational guides can however, be used to inform the development of such a definition.

In the Australian dietary guidelines (NHMRC, 2013), Guideline 3 states *Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.*

(c) Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.

Three of the four evidence statements for the Australian guideline to limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars are about consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages or soft drinks. The fourth evidence statement refers more generally to high or frequent consumption of added sugars.

The Eat for Health – Educator Guide lists certain foods to limit in order to reduce added sugars intake, for example, sweetened soft drinks and cordials, confectionary, sweetened sauces, puddings, muesli bars. It also recommends choosing (from within the five food groups) *mainly foods with little or no added sugar.*⁸

FSANZ is aware the Australian dietary guidelines are currently being reviewed⁹ and that at this stage targeted and public consultations are planned for the second quarter of 2023.

⁶ [Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991](#)

⁷ [Proposal P293 – Nutrition, health and related claims](#)

⁸ [Australian dietary guideline documents](#)

⁹ [Australian dietary guidelines review](#)

The Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults (Ministry of Health, 2020) recommends choosing and/or preparing foods and drinks *with little or no added sugar*. Reasons for this recommendation are in the guideline document and include that a diet low in added sugar is a key part of a healthy eating pattern. Reference is made to the recommendation by the World Health Organization (WHO) to lower intake of free sugars, with a footnote to the WHO definition of ‘free sugars’. It notes that adding sugar increases the energy content of food but adds no other useful nutrients. The document also states:

Sugars are naturally present in a wide range of foods including fruits, grains and milk. Sugars are also added to foods in the form of white, brown or raw sugar, honey, syrups and extracts. Sugary drinks include fruit drinks, powdered drinks, cordial, carbonated or fizzy drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks and flavoured waters. Some of these drink products are now available with intense (artificial) sweetener instead of sugar.

New Zealand food and nutrition guidelines for healthy infants and toddlers (revised 2012) and older people (revised 2013) also refer to ‘added sugar’, with the dietary guidelines for healthy older people also recommending to *limit your intake of high-sugar foods*¹⁰. Recommendations for children and young people (revised 2015) are to: *Prepare foods or choose pre-prepared foods, snacks and drinks that are low in sugar, especially added sugar*. It also recommends preparing foods or choosing pre-prepared foods, snacks and drinks *that are low in ‘free sugars’*. The guideline document states *children and young people do not need fruit juice to meet their fluid and nutrient requirements. Fruit juice is high in sugar, even if the label says it contains no added sugar*.

A Ministry of Health document (provided to inform the public on how to follow the dietary guidelines) Eating for Health Babies and Toddlers (revised 2013), recommends *Do not offer drinks containing natural or added sugar, such as fruit juice, cordial, fizzy drinks, or flavoured milks. These can damage teeth and cause the baby or toddler to develop a taste for sweetened foods*.

Dietary guidelines can also be used to inform decisions about what specific sources of sugars should be included in the definition (for example, processed fruit ingredients), as was done by the United States of America Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) (see section 3.1.2.5). In both Australia and New Zealand, dietary guidelines encourage consumption of fresh/whole vegetables and fruit. The New Zealand dietary guidelines note that frozen and canned vegetables and fruit are good options and recommend eating fresh fruit, limiting the amount of dried fruit and drinking plain water rather than drinking fruit juice. Australian guidelines recommend fruit juice is only consumed occasionally and state *eating vegetables and fruit in their whole food forms to maximise the impact on a range of health benefits; and fruit should mostly be eaten fresh and raw because of the low fibre content of fruit juice and the high energy density and ‘stickiness’ (which may have implications for dental caries) of dried fruit*.

3.1.2.2 ‘Free sugars’ compared to ‘added sugars’

The WHO provides recommendations on the intake of ‘free sugars’ (WHO, 2015). In the WHO *Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children*, it states: *The term “sugars” includes intrinsic sugars, which are those incorporated within the structure of intact fruit and vegetables; sugars from milk (lactose and galactose); and free sugars, which are monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates. Because there is no reported evidence of adverse effects of consumption of intrinsic sugars and sugars naturally present in milk, the recommendations of this guideline focus on the effect of free sugars intake.*

¹⁰ [New Zealand dietary guideline documents](#)

According to Mela and Woolner (2018), the key distinction between what they consider are 'broadly accepted' definitions of added and free sugars is that free sugars includes all occurring sugars in non-intact (i.e. juiced or pureed) fruit and vegetables. It notes however, there are still some inconsistencies and grey areas to be resolved in defining added and free sugars for certain reasons including labelling. In relation to 'free sugars' the paper notes the continuum between clearly intact and clearly free sugar sources with respect to processed fruits and vegetables (e.g. chopped, cooked, sieved) and that *it is uncertain where or how the boundary between intact and free should be set*.

The WHO definition of 'free sugars' is not sufficiently clear to be used as a definition for regulatory purposes. It could however be used to inform the development of a definition of 'added sugars' for the purposes of nutrition labelling, given there is no agreed definition or description of 'added sugars' in Australia and New Zealand. Which sugars from the continuum of fruit and vegetable products as noted above would be included in an 'added sugars' definition would be a key decision to be made in this context. The term 'added sugars' would be needed in nutrition labelling rather than 'free sugars' for consistency with the term used in dietary guidelines, to aid consumer understanding.

3.1.2.3 Definitions used for food composition data bases

Values for added and free sugars for foods have been added to food composition databases in both Australia and New Zealand in recent years, as detailed below. All determinations of added and free sugars are an estimate as information about specific foods and their ingredients is not available to those preparing the databases. The values may differ depending on the definitions and/or the methodology used for estimating the values in each food. The definitions used as the basis for the added sugars values in Australia and New Zealand databases were not the same. In particular, sugars from honey and concentrated fruit or vegetable juices were included in the New Zealand values but not in the Australian values. The values for added sugars will therefore differ between the datasets for certain foods. This may continue to be the case even if the values are based on an agreed definition, as the methodology used to estimate the values may differ.

In 2015/2016, FSANZ developed two datasets to allocate the amount of added sugars and free sugars present in foods in the AUSNUT 2011-13 dataset. In order to obtain the data, methods were developed to determine the amount of 'added sugars' and 'free sugars' in foods, noting there are no analytical methods that distinguish between sugars added to foods and sugars inherent in foods. FSANZ also published an updated version of our reference database, The Australian Food Composition Database, in early 2019. This dataset also reports added and free sugars using the same definitions as the 2015/16 dataset. Another release will be published in late 2021. The definitions used in the development of the datasets were based on the existing definition of 'sugars' (section 1.1.2—2(b) of the Code (excluding maltodextrin and similar products)) (Appendix 1) for 'added sugars' and the WHO definition for 'free sugars'¹¹.

Data for added and free sugars were included in the latest release of the New Zealand Food Composition Database published in 2019. The USFDA definition for added sugars, which includes sugars from honey and concentrated fruit or vegetable juices, was used to determine these data. The WHO definition for 'free sugars' was used to determine 'free sugars' data.¹²

¹¹ Further information is available on the [FSANZ website](#).

¹² [NZ Food Composition Data glossary – definitions of added sugars and free sugars](#)

3.1.2.4 Stakeholder views

The focus of the targeted consultation meetings with representatives from public health, industry, jurisdictions and government health agencies held in late 2020 was on the technical issues associated with defining and declaring 'added sugars'.

There was general agreement that the following should not be added sugars:

- sugars from milk (lactose)
- sugars from fresh whole fruit and vegetables (cell walls not broken)

and that the following should be added sugars:

- mono- and disaccharides added to a food as such (excluding lactose naturally present in milk and other dairy ingredients)
- mono- and disaccharides from malt, malt extracts, maltodextrin, deionised fruit juice, fruit syrups and honey.

There was also general agreement that sugars from vegetables should be treated in the same way as sugars from fruit in the definition. Various attendees considered the function of an ingredient in a food, i.e. added as a sweetener or not, should be taken into account in deciding whether it was an added sugar. Attendees noted there would need to be further discussion on whether lower energy carbohydrates such as tagatose should be in the definition.

The main area of disagreement was whether or not sugars from fruit and vegetable products that were not whole or cut, such as purees, pulps, powders and juice (single strength) and dried fruit/vegetables should be included in the definition. There was general agreement sugars from concentrated fruit juice should be included in the definition, however the food industry considered this should only be the case if the juice was not subsequently diluted in the final food.

Some public health representatives indicated sugars from processed fruit and vegetables should be included in the definition. Reasons included that the dietary guidelines don't treat fruit juice and dried fruit the same as fresh fruit and the health benefits of some processed fruits (e.g. powdered) are not the same as fresh fruit. They also noted that releasing sugars from cells (such as when fruit is processed resulting in breaking down of the cell walls) increases the availability of 'free sugars' which are harmful to health and therefore these 'free sugars' including when obtained from processed fruit, should be included in the definition of 'added sugars'. It was noted that although the discussion was focused on defining 'added sugars', 'free sugars' should be included in the definition. A comment was also made that energy content is not the major issue – it's the effect on metabolism and how the substance is physiologically managed in the body that is important; tooth decay was also noted.

Industry attendees did not support including sugars from most processed fruit and vegetables in the definition of added sugars. Comments included that processed fruit products are still fruit even if no longer intact, dietary guidelines support consumption of fruit, adding processed fruit to a product is adding fruit not sugar and if considered added sugar, some companies may use flavourings and other food additives instead of processed fruit ingredients to reduce the added sugar content. Some attendees considered it useful to keep the definition simple, noting the USFDA definition is complicated.

Some representatives from jurisdictions and government public health agencies stated sugars from processed fruit and vegetables should be included in the definition. There was a comment that modern definitions included fruit concentrates, purees, pastes, juices and a suggestion intact cell walls could be the basis of deciding which sugars are not added sugars.

3.1.2.5 Definitions used in other countries

There is no universally agreed definition for 'added sugars'. Nutrient labelling schemes that include added or free sugars are being considered or have been implemented in a number of other countries over recent years, with different definitions in different countries and for different purposes. A summary of the definitions used in the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) is provided below.

Added sugars are defined in the US for the declaration of added sugars in the nutrition facts label (gram declaration and percent Daily Value)¹³. *Added sugars are either added during the processing of foods, or are packaged as such, and include sugars (free, mono and disaccharides), sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices that are in excess of what would be expected from the same volume of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice of the same type.* The definition excludes some fruit and vegetable juice concentrates including when used as the fruit component of jellies, jams or preserves.

Whole fruit, fruit pieces, pulps, purees, 100% fruit juices, and certain fruit juice concentrates are not considered added sugars by the USFDA because they are nutrient rich and maintain the basic properties of a fruit. The USFDA also consider dried fruits should not be considered an added sugar because they are essentially a dehydrated whole fruit and still retain the nutrients and other components of a whole fruit. In response to submitter comments to exclude ingredients not added for sweetening purposes, the FDA noted *evidence that excess calorie consumption from added sugars is a public health concern. In determining which sugars should be included in the definition of added sugars, we have considered the presence of added sugars as a component of dietary intake and whether it is consistent with the concept of empty calories as discussed in the 2015 DGAC Report (Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee)*¹⁴ (USFDA, 2016).

The UK government recommends 'free sugars' should not make up more than 5% of energy intake per day. The National Health Service (NHS) advises consumers that free sugars are sugars added to food or drinks, and sugars found naturally in honey, syrups, and unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies and purees¹⁵. Public Health England has broadened the definition, for the purpose of estimating free sugars intake, to: *all added sugars in any form; all sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable juices, purées and pastes and similar products in which the structure has been broken down; all sugars in drinks (except for dairy-based drinks); and lactose and galactose added as ingredients* (Swan et al., 2018).

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has been requested to update its Scientific Opinion on Dietary Reference Values for carbohydrates and dietary fibre published in 2010 on the basis of the most recent scientific evidence. The aim of the work is to derive a science-based cut-off value for a daily exposure to added sugars which is not associated with adverse health effects. Public consultation on the draft scientific opinion is scheduled to take place in the middle of 2021¹⁶. A protocol for the scientific opinion states that added sugars and free sugars will be addressed, with the WHO definition of free sugars referred to (EFSA, 2018).

¹³ [FDA Regulation: 21 CFR 101.9\(c\)\(6\)\(iii\)](#)

¹⁴ [Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee](#)

¹⁵ [UK NHS. Sugar: the facts](#)

¹⁶ [EFSA's assessment of the safety of dietary sugars](#)

3.1.3 Quantification of added sugars

Given it is not possible to chemically analyse for added sugars, other methods would be needed for quantitative declaration of added sugars in the NIP. The ease of quantification would be subject to the definition of added sugars, for example, whether or not distinctions are made between fruit juice (undiluted) and concentrated fruit juice, or where the boundary for 'added sugars' is set on the continuum between clearly intact and clearly free sugar sources from fruits and vegetables.

Matters relating to quantification of added sugars that would need to be considered include:

- whether a method for determining added sugars content would be included in the Code and/or guidance
- form of the food to which the added sugars declaration applies
- foods where the amount of added sugar changes during processing of food, for example, due to fermentation, caramelisation, or hydrolysis
- use of Product Information Forms for recording added sugars content of ingredients
- use of recipe management systems for determining added sugars content
- use of food composition databases in supporting added sugars quantification
- whether added sugars would be included in the Nutrition Panel Calculator.

At the 2020 targeted consultations, industry stakeholders indicated a recipe-based approach for quantification of added sugars would be possible, subject to the complexity of a definition and use of thresholds (see section 3.1.6). They also suggested a quantification method be clearly documented and be as simple as possible. Representatives from jurisdictions suggested the quantification method should be in the Code. Public health attendees commented that as recipes are already used for determining NIP values, a similar approach could be used for added sugars.

3.1.4 Foods in scope

The scope of foods required to declare added sugars would need to be determined when considering including added sugars in the NIP. For example, added sugars information could be applied to all foods currently requiring an NIP. In addition, whether foods currently exempt from displaying an NIP (e.g. standardised alcoholic beverages, ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages) would also be exempt from displaying added sugars information would need to be considered.

At the 2020 targeted consultations, industry and public health stakeholders supported having a consistent approach for foods displaying added sugars information.

Single ingredient foods are discussed in the following section.

Foods regulated under Part 2.9 (Special purpose foods) of the Code would also need to be considered. Part 2.9 standards are:

- Standard 2.9.1 – Infant Formula Products
- Standard 2.9.2 – Food for Infants
- Standard 2.9.3 – Formulated meal replacements and formulated supplementary foods
- Standard 2.9.4 – Formulated supplementary sports foods
- Standard 2.9.5 – Food for special medical purposes

At the 2020 targeted consultation meetings, public health stakeholders did not support any exemptions from added sugars labelling for foods produced under the Part 2.9 standards given many of these foods (particularly infant foods, formulated meal replacements and

supplementary sports foods) are marketed to and widely consumed by the general public. Some industry representatives supported only foods produced under Standards 2.9.1 and 2.9.5 being exempt from added sugars labelling on the basis that infant formula products and foods for special medical use are tightly regulated and that transparency about the added sugars content of foods produced in the other three standards is important. However, other industry representatives indicated they would want to consider whether foods produced under the Part 2.9 standards should display added sugars information once a definition is proposed.

3.1.5 Labelling of pure/single ingredient products for sale

A decision would need to be made as to whether the labelling of single ingredient foods included as sources of added sugars in a definition (e.g. white sugar, honey, concentrated fruit juice) would include an amount for added sugars (i.e. the same figure as for total sugars) or zero added sugars, and/or some other labelling information, or whether such foods would be exempt from added sugars labelling.

At the 2020 targeted consultations, industry stakeholders (including the non-alcoholic beverage sector) considered having an amount of added sugars in an NIP on single ingredient foods would not make sense and could be confusing for consumers given no sugar is 'added' to such foods. They claimed single ingredient foods are not added sugars until they are added to some other food and suggested such foods be exempt from added sugars labelling. In contrast, public health stakeholders stated the intent is that all 'free sugars' should be included in a definition and therefore single ingredient foods with free sugars should have a line in the NIP for added sugars (same value as that for total sugars).

3.1.6 Thresholds

Whether to apply thresholds to either or both of the following situations would need to be determined:

- the amount of sugar in an ingredient, below which the sugar would only be required to be included in the total added sugars amount
- the amount of added sugars in a final food, above which added sugars labelling would be required.

Very small amounts of sugars may be present in some ingredients, for example as a carrier for food additives such as flavour compounds or added nutrients. Maltodextrin is one common carrier and as noted in section 3.1.2.4, monosaccharides and disaccharides from maltodextrin could be included in a definition of added sugars. Some industry representatives at the 2020 targeted consultation meetings claimed sugars such as these are not of dietary or physiological significance and are not added as a sweetener. They also suggested including these very small amounts of added sugars in a NIP declaration would not assist consumers in choosing healthier options and may confuse consumers when sugar is not listed in the statement of ingredients (when there were no other added sugars in a food).

Industry representatives stated incidental sugars could continue to be included in the total sugars amount in the NIP but that it would be onerous to assess every additive or nutrient ingredient to determine if they contained any of the ingredients classed as added sugars as they would have to rely on information from suppliers of each ingredient.

The other aspect discussed was whether a threshold would be applied to the total amount of added sugars in a food, with added sugars labelling not required on foods with an added sugars amount below the threshold. Currently, if the average quantity of 'total sugars' is less than 1 g per serving or per unit quantity of the food, the Code allows for the average quantity

to be expressed as 'LESS than 1 g' in the NIP. This approach could be applied to an added sugars declaration in the NIP.

3.1.7 Conclusion

While considering technical matters associated with including added sugars in the NIP is likely to be complex, we have not identified any technical impediments to implementing this option. Given Ministers agreed from the policy work that including added sugars in the NIP best met the desired outcome and we have not identified any technical impediments, FSANZ intends to prepare a proposal to consider amending the Code with regard to added sugars information in the NIP.

In accordance with the FSANZ Act, when proposing a change to the Code, FSANZ must make its own assessment based on the best available scientific evidence and having regard to a number of matters including consideration of costs and benefits (section 59), FSANZ objectives (subsection 18(1)) and other matters set out in subsection 18(2) of the FSANZ Act.

3.2 Pictorial about sugar applied to sugary beverages/sugar-sweetened beverages

3.2.1 Background

3.2.1.1 Consumption of sugary beverages/sugar-sweetened beverages and WHO 2015 guideline

As stated in the 2019 policy paper, there is increasing concern that intake of added sugars, particularly from SSBs can increase overall energy intake which can lead to weight gain, overweight and obesity. Obesity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers and other conditions such as musculoskeletal conditions and kidney disease.

The WHO guideline on sugars intake draws on evidence from two systematic reviews (WHO, 2015). The evidence for an association between sugars intake and body weight is mostly drawn from studies on intake of SSBs, highlighting that changing consumption of SSBs is considered an important dietary intervention to reduce intake of free sugars for the purpose of affecting body weight. Free sugars are also associated with dental caries.

Based on Australian 2011-12 food consumption data, non-alcoholic beverages were the main contributor to added (35% of total added sugars) and free sugars (38% of total free sugars) intake in the Australian population¹⁷. While more recent intake data are not available, 2020 'apparent' consumption data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹⁸ states that non-alcoholic beverages contributed 23% of added sugars and 26% of free sugars from all foods and non-alcoholic beverages. Discretionary foods (including beverages) were the source of 92% of added sugars and 89% of free sugars. This suggests that although there has been an increase in the availability of sugar-free and lower sugar non-alcoholic beverages in recent years, the contribution of sugar from non-alcoholic beverages to total sugar intake is likely to still be significant.

¹⁷ [Australian Health Survey: Consumption of added sugars, 2011-12](#)

¹⁸ [Apparent Consumption of Selected Foodstuffs, Australia, 2019-20 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

3.2.1.2 FRSC policy work

In the 2018 CRIS, an option (option 6) to achieve the desired outcome was a pictorial display of the amount of sugars and/or added sugars in a serving of food. In the 2019 policy paper it was noted there was very little government support for a pictorial applied to all foods, with the main concern being the existing investment in, and the potential for this option to create a conflict with, the HSR System. However, following consideration of submitter comments, an option of applying a pictorial only to SSBs was included in the qualitative preliminary assessment of four feasible options (statement of ingredients, added sugars in the NIP, pictorial applied to all foods, pictorial applied to SSBs) in the 2019 policy paper. From that assessment FRSC concluded the option warranted further consideration due to:

- these beverages being the main source of added sugars in the diet
- evidence showing a positive association between the consumption of non-alcoholic beverages and body weight/obesity
- the low uptake of the HSR star icon across the non-alcoholic beverage category minimising the risk of a conflict between the HSR and a new pictorial
- SSBs having few other negative nutrients thereby reducing concerns with overemphasizing a single nutrient
- the majority of studies on pictorial approaches about sugars having been undertaken on SSBs.

Ministers subsequently requested FSANZ further consider the option in the context of the outcomes from the HSR five-year review.

The 2019 policy paper also noted that if the option of applying a pictorial about sugar only to SSBs is to be considered further, key issues to consider are:

- outcomes of the HSR review in relation to beverages
- which beverages are considered to be SSBs
- whether the pictorial labels should be applied to SSBs, or the broader category of beverages (to enable comparison)
- whether the pictorial labels would present total or added sugars, and
- consumer understanding of pictorial labels.

3.2.2 Health Star Rating System five-year review

Outcomes from the HSR five-year review relevant to consideration of the option of applying a pictorial about sugar to SSBs are discussed below.¹⁹

As the energy icon (only) option has been removed from the HSR graphic suite (Recommendation 2), the non-alcoholic beverage sector will have to use a stars graphic if they proceed with implementing the HSR System on their beverages. Previously, the non-alcoholic beverage sector tended to use the energy icon for lower scoring products and stars for 5 star products. Compared with the energy icon (only), the HSR stars graphic will provide consumers with interpretive information to support choice.

The HSR System remains voluntary with a five year uptake target set at 70% of intended products. Recommendation 9 from the review states that if this uptake target is not met the HSR System should be mandated.

Changes have been made to the way the HSR is calculated for non-dairy beverages based on adjusted total sugars, energy and fruit/vegetable/nuts/legumes points only, to better distinguish water and beverages nutritionally similar to water from high energy drinks

¹⁹ [HSR System five-year review report](#)

(Recommendation 5). Following further adjustments to the calculator made after the review, non-alcoholic beverages will typically have the following HSR:

- plain waters – 5 stars
- unsweetened flavoured waters – 4.5
- 100% fruit and vegetable juices – between 2.5 and 4 stars (based on sugars and energy content)
- diet drinks – no more than 3.5 stars
- sugary soft drinks – between 0.5 and 2 stars (based on sugars and energy content).

Before the HSR review, fruit juices typically had an HSR of 4-5 stars. As reflected above, 100% fruit and vegetable juices will now have a greater range of HSR stars depending on energy and sugar content.

Following amendments to the HSR calculator being finalised in February 2021, the Australian and New Zealand Beverage Councils indicated a commitment to encourage use of HSR across their sector. The Australian Beverage Council is providing guidance on HSR implementation and both Councils are encouraging members to implement HSR stars on their labels by the end of 2023.

3.2.3 Conclusion

Australian and New Zealand governments are promoting the use of the HSR System to support industry in meeting the uptake target of 70% of intended products by the end of 2025. In addition, the Australian and New Zealand Beverage Councils have indicated they are committed to supporting the use of the HSR stars graphic by their members. Applying a pictorial about sugar on SSBs has the potential to clearly convey the significant contribution these foods make to the consumption of added/total sugars. However, consideration of an additional or alternative interpretive labelling scheme for SSBs at a time when governments are promoting HSR uptake and the non-alcoholic beverage sector is encouraging members to use the HSR System, may not be appropriate.

Under Priority 2 of the Food Regulation Priorities 2017-2021, there has been policy work on exploring options for improving the composition of the food supply²⁰. Ministers have noted sugary drinks as a possible case study to consider regulatory and non-regulatory options however this work is yet to start. A coordinated broader government approach related to reducing consumption of SSBs would help to support a particular approach for sugar information on SSB labels should a pictorial approach together with the HSR, or instead of the HSR, be desired.

FSANZ therefore recommends no further work on this option is undertaken while HSR implementation is being broadly supported by governments, noting HSR use by the non-alcoholic beverage sector will be monitored as part of the overall government monitoring programme for the HSR System.

²⁰ Further information is available on the [Food Regulation Secretariat website](#)

3.3 Changing the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients

3.3.1 Background

A change to the requirements for the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients was examined as part of the technical evaluation for Recommendation 12²¹ of *Labelling Logic: Review of Labelling Law and Policy* (Blewett et al., 2011) as well as in the 2019 FRSC policy paper. In addition to the outcomes from both these reports, we have had regard to the policy guideline in considering the ingredient labelling option.

The technical evaluation for Recommendation 12 completed by FSANZ in 2016 evaluated the use of the term 'added sugars' followed by a bracketed list of sugars-based ingredients in the statement of ingredients. The main outcomes relevant to the current review are:

- Limited consumer evidence suggests a bracketed list would likely assist consumers who are interested in added sugars or wish to avoid them. However, such labelling would be limited in supporting food choices consistent with dietary guidelines given it does not help consumers assess the amount of added sugars in a food.
- A number of complex issues would need to be resolved to implement this labelling approach including: listing of compound ingredients, defining 'added sugars' (noting some manufacturers considered sugars added for non-sweetening purposes should not be included), highlighting added sugars while having total sugars in the NIP and in the context of not highlighting other ingredients of concern to health, consumer understanding of a long list of added sugars vs a shorter list, whether sugars captured under the generic name 'sugar' would need to be listed separately.
- Food manufacturers considered changes arising from implementing a bracketed list would significantly affect production and labelling of processed foods containing sugars-based ingredients. For example there could be cost implications if multiple labels were required to reflect variations in sources of ingredients, adjustments to Product Information Forms to identify sugars-based ingredients would be needed which is a lengthy process to negotiate with suppliers and ingredient lists would likely be longer and take up more space on the label.
- The FSANZ 2015 Consumer Label Survey found that approximately 52% of Australians and 46% of New Zealanders knew that ingredients must be in a specific order in the statement of ingredients with the majority knowing the list is in order of descending incoming weight (FSANZ, 2016). About two-thirds of Australians and New Zealanders said they used the ingredient list when purchasing a food for the first time.

3.3.2 Evaluation of the statement of ingredients option in the 2019 policy paper

In the 2019 FRSC policy paper, two implementation approaches were suggested for the ingredient labelling option:

- including the term 'sugars' followed by a bracketed list of individual sugars-based ingredients; or
- highlighting sugars-based ingredients via asterisks or emboldening.

²¹ [FSANZ's technical evaluation on Recommendation 12](#)

Given the recent changes to the Code for allergen labelling which includes mandatory emboldening of allergens in the statement of ingredients²², emboldening sugars-based ingredients or using asterisks (which are used to draw attention to other qualities of the food) would likely be confusing for consumers. Therefore the following discussion only refers to the option of using a bracketed list approach to identify sugars-based ingredients.

Similar to the technical evaluation for Recommendation 12, the benefits of identifying sugars-based ingredients in the statement of ingredients discussed in the policy paper included:

- helping consumers to identify sugars without having knowledge of the many different names for sugars-based ingredients thereby reducing confusion
- providing transparency with regard to added sugars in a food; and
- helping consumers determine the contribution of added sugars relative to other ingredients in a food.

The main weaknesses identified for this option were similar to those reported from Recommendation 12 work as discussed above.

Industry submitters to the 2018 CRIS indicated limited support for ingredient labelling because of it potentially providing an imbalanced focus on sugars and because added sugars would not be quantified. Most other submitters considered the option would either be partially effective in addressing the policy problem, noting skills and knowledge would be required to understand the information, or that it would be effective in combination with another option such as declaring added sugars in the NIP or education.

Based on a high level qualitative assessment of the impacts and benefits of four feasible options in the policy paper (statement of ingredients, added sugars in the NIP, pictorial applied to all foods, pictorial applied to sugar sweetened beverages), changing the statement of ingredients was considered to offer the lowest net benefit. This option (in comparison to the other three feasible options) was considered to not require major changes to label design (similar to option 4), be of minimal benefit to consumers, not encourage food reformulation (though the bracketed list approach might stimulate some reformulation) and not provide significant support for other public health programs.

The 2019 policy paper did not discuss an option of combining identifying sugars-based ingredients with added sugars in the NIP in any detail. However, in terms of meeting the desired outcome, such a change to the statement of ingredients is not likely to enhance the effectiveness of added sugars in the NIP, as it is the quantification of added sugars that enables consumers to choose foods with 'little' added sugars.

3.3.3 Dietary guidelines and the policy guideline

As discussed in section 3.1.2.1, the Australian dietary guidelines advise consumers to limit the intake of foods containing added sugars. A guide for educators also recommends choosing mainly foods with little or no added sugars. The New Zealand dietary guidelines also recommend choosing foods with little or no added sugars. While a bracketed list of sugars-based ingredients would provide information about the presence of sugars-based ingredients which dietary guidelines recommend to limit, such a list would not help consumers to identify foods with 'little' added sugars.

Based on findings from the 2015 Consumer Label Survey (FSANZ, 2016), fewer than half of Australians and New Zealanders understand that ingredients in the statement of ingredients are listed in descending order of ingoing weight. This suggests the bracketed list approach may not achieve the policy principle in the policy guideline, *is easily accessed and understood by consumers*, for a significant proportion of Australians and New Zealanders.

²² [New requirements for allergen labelling](#)

Also the bracketed list approach does not address other principles in the policy guideline such as enabling consumers to compare the added sugars content of foods or to take into account the nutritional content of the whole food and therefore may draw greater attention to sugars than other nutrients of concern to health, potentially misleading consumers. The ingredient labelling approach could also be misleading as the number of sugars-based ingredients in a bracketed list may not correspond to the total amount of added sugar i.e. a long list of sugars-based ingredients does not necessarily mean the food has more added sugars than a food with a shorter list of sugars-based ingredients.

3.3.4 Sugars-based ingredient labelling in Canada

Canada recently introduced new regulations for label information about sugars:

- all sugars-based ingredients must be grouped in the ingredient list under 'sugars'
- % Daily Value (DV) for total sugars (based on a DV for sugars of 100 g) must be included in the Nutrition Facts table
- a footnote about the % DV must be added to the bottom of the Nutrition Facts table to explain that 5% or less is a little and 15% or more is a lot.

The new regulation requires the term 'sugars' to be declared in the ingredient list in descending order of the proportion or percentage of all the sugars-based ingredients of the food. The sugars-based ingredients listed in brackets after the term 'sugars' are also required to be listed in descending order by weight. This requirement is intended to help consumers understand the proportion of sugars-based ingredients in the food relative to other ingredients as well as identify unfamiliar sources of sugars.

Overall the new provisions were aimed at providing information and educating consumers on the content of sugar and other sugars-based ingredients in foods, with the goal of supporting a reduction in sugar intake consistent with the recommendations of Canada's Food Guide (to limit foods high in sugar).

Note that Health Canada is also planning to introduce mandatory front-of-pack labelling for foods high in total sugars, sodium and saturated fats, due to excessive intakes of these nutrients and their association with increased risk of chronic disease. As of May 2021, the front-of-pack system had not been finalised.²³

3.3.5 Conclusion

The 2019 FRSC policy paper found changing the statement of ingredients would offer the least net benefit from a high level qualitative assessment. The 2016 technical evaluation for Recommendation 12 of the Labelling Review also noted limitations of the option and industry concerns with implementation.

Taking into account the outcomes from both the 2016 and 2019 evaluations and having regard to the policy guideline, FSANZ recommends no further work is undertaken on the option to change the requirements for the statement of ingredients to identify sugars-based ingredients as it does not meet the desired outcome for the following key reasons:

- The 2015 FSANZ Consumer Label Survey reported fewer than half Australians and New Zealanders understand that ingredients in the statement of ingredients are in descending order of ingoing weight, suggesting a bracketed list approach may not help consumers determine the contribution of added sugars relative to other ingredients in a food. Also ease of consumer understanding of labelling is a policy principle in the policy guideline.

²³ [Health Canada's front-of-pack labelling](#)

- Consumers would not be able to quantify the amount of added sugars and therefore not be able to easily implement dietary guidelines in relation to identifying foods with 'little' added sugar content. Labels providing information that enables consumers to implement dietary guidelines is a policy principle in the policy guideline.
- Consumers would not be able to directly compare the added sugars content of foods. The ability for consumers to compare foods is a policy principle in the policy guideline.
- Identifying sugars-based ingredients in the statement of ingredients may draw greater attention to sugars than other nutrients of concern to health, potentially misleading consumers.

References

Blewett N, Goddard N, Pettigrew S, Reynolds C, Yeatman H (2011) *Labelling logic: Review of food labelling law and policy (2011)*. Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, Australia. <https://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/review-food-labelling> Accessed on 5 May 2021.

EFSA (2018) Protocol for the scientific opinion on the Tolerable Upper Intake Level of dietary sugars, [Protocol for the scientific opinion on the Tolerable Upper Intake Level of dietary sugars, EFSA Journal - Wiley Online Library](#) [Protocol for the scientific opinion on the Tolerable Upper Intake Level of dietary sugars - - 2018 - EFSA Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)

FSANZ (2016) Consumer Label Survey 2015. Food labelling use and understanding in Australia and New Zealand. <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Pages/consumerlabelsurvey2015.aspx> Accessed on 3 May 2021.

Mela DJ, Woolner EM (2018) Perspective: total, added, or free? What kind of sugars should we be talking about? *Advances Nutr* 9:2:63-69. <https://doi.org/10.1093/advances/nmx020> Accessed on 3 May 2021.

Ministry of Health (2020) Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults: Updated 2020. Wellington: Ministry of Health. <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/eating-and-activity-guidelines-new-zealand-adults> Accessed on 3 May 2021.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2013) Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/adg> Accessed on 3 May 2021.

Swan GE, Powell NA, Knowles BL, Bush MT, Levy LB (2018) A definition of free sugars for the UK. *Public Health Nutr* 21:9:1636-1638. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S136898001800085X> Accessed on 5 May 2021.

USFDA (2016) Federal Register/Vol 81, No. 103/Friday, May 27, 2016/Rules and Regulations <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-05-27/pdf/2016-11867.pdf> Accessed 4 May 2021.

WHO (2015) *Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children*. Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241549028> Accessed on 3 May 2021.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Code definitions and claim requirements relating to sugar(s)

In section 1.1.2—2, ‘sugars’ is defined as follows:

sugars:

(a) in Standard 1.2.7, Standard 1.2.8 and Schedule 4 (except where it appears with an asterisk as ‘sugars*’)—means monosaccharides and disaccharides; and

- (b) otherwise—means any of the following products, derived from any source:
- (i) hexose monosaccharides and disaccharides, including dextrose, fructose, sucrose and lactose;
 - (ii) starch hydrolysate;
 - (iii) glucose syrups, maltodextrin and similar products;
 - (iv) products derived at a sugar refinery, including brown sugar and molasses;
 - (v) icing sugar;
 - (vi) invert sugar;
 - (vii) fruit sugar syrup;

but does not include:

- (i) malt or malt extracts; or
- (ii) sorbitol, mannitol, glycerol, xylitol, polydextrose, isomalt, maltitol, maltitol syrup, erythritol or lactitol.

In section 1.1.2—3, ‘sugar’ is defined as follows:

sugar means, unless otherwise expressly stated, any of the following:

- (a) white sugar;
- (b) caster sugar;
- (c) icing sugar;
- (d) loaf sugar;
- (e) coffee sugar;
- (f) raw sugar.

Section 4—3 in schedule 4 of the Code has conditions for ‘no added sugar’ and ‘unsweetened’ claims as follows:

No added	<p>(a) The food contains no added sugars*, honey, malt, or malt extracts; and</p> <p>(b) the food contains no added concentrated fruit juice or deionised fruit juice, unless the food is any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a brewed soft drink; (ii) an electrolyte drink; (iii) an electrolyte drink base; (iv) juice blend; (v) a formulated beverage; (vi) fruit juice; (vii) fruit drink; (viii) vegetable juice; (ix) mineral water or spring water; (x) a non-alcoholic beverage.
Unsweetened	<p>(a) The food meets the conditions for a nutrition content claim about no added sugar; and</p> <p>(b) the food contains no intense sweeteners, sorbitol, mannitol, glycerol, xylitol, isomalt, maltitol syrup or lactitol.</p>

Ingredient labelling

Section 10—2 in Schedule 10 of Code permits the generic name 'sugar' to be used in the statement of ingredients, as follows:

- (a) The name 'sugar' may be used to describe:
 - (i) white sugar; or
 - (ii) white refined sugar; or
 - (iii) caster sugar or castor sugar; or
 - (iv) loaf sugar or cube sugar; or
 - (v) icing sugar; or
 - (vi) coffee sugar; or
 - (vii) coffee crystals; or
 - (viii) raw sugar.

- (b) The name 'sugars' must not be used in a statement of ingredients.