

TECHNICAL ISSUES ON NUTRITION LABELLING

– NUTRITION LABELLING FORMATS –

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition information on food labels can facilitate consumers in making healthy food choices. Standardized nutrition labels further assist consumers in reading nutrition labels. According to the Opinion Survey on Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information¹ conducted in January 2004, 94.5% of the general public supported standardization of the format of nutrition labels for easy reference by consumers and to avoid confusion.

BACKGROUND

2. In general, several formatting issues are referred to under standardized format, including sequence/listing order of nutrients, location of the label on the package, size of the label, font type and size, rule size and line spacing, indent, colour, etc. Apart from these basic formatting issues, the arrangements of nutrition information² within the nutrition label vary. The most prevalent terms used in describing these formats are “Standard format”, “Horizontal format” and “Linear format” (Annex 1).

3. To allow more flexibility for the trade in designing nutrition labels, the Administration proposes that simplification of nutrition label is allowed for products containing insignificant amounts of nutrients, the above named formats can be further modified to “Simplified standard format”, “Simplified horizontal

¹ A total of 1202 respondents aged 18 or above were successfully interviewed by telephone between 16-18 January 2004.

² In the latest proposal, nutrition information to be required on NL in Phase I: Energy, protein, carbohydrate, total fat, saturated fat and sodium. Nutrition information to be required on NL in Phase II: Energy, protein, carbohydrate, total fat, saturated fat, sodium, sugars, cholesterol, dietary fibre and calcium.

format” and “Simplified linear format” (Annex 2), resulting in a total of six different formats of nutrition labels.

PROPOSED NUTRITION LABELLING FORMATS

Basic Requirements

4. According to the proposal of the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information, the only requirement on nutrition labelling format is to present the nutrition information in a tabular format and place the nutrition label on a conspicuous place, which means that both “Standard format” and “Horizontal format” are acceptable. In previous technical meetings, the trade has expressed difficulties in fixing nutrition labels on small packages. After thorough consideration, the Administration now proposes the followings –

Acceptance of Linear format for small package with less than 200 cm² total surface area

5. According to the NL proposal, exemption from nutrition labelling³ is granted to small package with less than 100 cm² total surface area. To allow more flexibility for the trade in designing nutrition label for small package, the Administration proposes the acceptance of “Linear format” for small package with less than 200 cm² total surface area (Annex I).

Acceptance of Simplified formats for prepackaged foods with insignificant amount of energy and/or nutrients

6. Simplified formats are applicable to prepackaged foods with insignificant amount of energy and/or nutrients (i.e., at least five elements out of energy and the core nutrients amount to zero according to the rounding rules⁴).

³ Products would not warrant the exemption if they carry nutrient-related claims or nutrition information.

⁴ Under Phase I, the criterion for prepackaged foods with insignificant amount of energy and/or nutrients will be “at least three elements out of energy and the core nutrients amount to zero according to the rounding rules”.

Selected nutrient information must always be declared when simplified format is applied (Annex 3), which includes: -

- i. values of energy, protein, total fat and carbohydrate, even they are zero;
- ii. values of claimed nutrients, even they are zero;
- iii. values of any core nutrients that are present in the food in more than insignificant amount; and
- iv. the statement “Not a significant source of (naming core nutrients that have been omitted from the nutrient declaration).⁵

7. In summary, all six different formats, namely “Standard format”, “Horizontal format”, “Linear format”, “Simplified standard format”, “Simplified horizontal format” and “Simplified linear format”, may be used under different circumstances, depending on the size of the package and whether the food contains insignificant amount of energy and/or nutrients. The flowchart in Annex 4 facilitates the trade in making decision on the use of nutrition labelling format.

VIEWS SOUGHT

8. Representatives from the trade are invited to comment on the proposed nutrition labelling formats for the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information in Hong Kong.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
August 2005

⁵ This statement required to be listed in the nutrition label will not constitute a nutrient-related claim.

Standard Format : -

Nutrition Information	
Per 100 g	
Energy	370 kcal
Protein	10 g
Total fat	9 g
Saturated fat	7 g
Cholesterol	3 mg
Carbohydrate	63 g
Sugars	10 g
Dietary fibre	15 g
Sodium	330 mg
Calcium	1000 mg

Horizontal Format : -

Nutrition	Amount		Amount	
Information per 100 g	Energy	370 kcal	Carbohydrate	63 g
	Protein	10 g	Sugars	10 g
	Total fat	9 g	Dietary fibre	15 g
	Saturated fat	7 g	Sodium	330 mg
	Cholesterol	3 mg	Calcium	1000 mg

Linear Format : -

Nutrition Information per 100g
Energy 370 kcal, Protein 10 g, Total fat 9 g, Saturated fat 7 g,
Cholesterol 3 mg, Carbohydrate 63 g, Sugars 10 g,
Dietary fibre 15 g, Sodium 330 mg, Calcium 1000 mg.

Simplified Standard Format : -

(without nutrient-related claims or additional nutrition information)

Nutrition Information	
Per 100 g	
Energy	290 kcal
Protein	10 g
Total fat	0 g
Carbohydrate	63 g
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.	

Simplified Horizontal Format : -

(without nutrient-related claims or additional nutrition information)

Nutrition	Amount	Amount
Information	Energy 290 kcal	Total fat 0 g
per 100 g	Protein 10 g	Carbohydrate 63 g
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.		

Simplified Linear Format: -

(without nutrient-related claims or additional nutrition information)

Nutrition Information per 100g
Energy 290 kcal, Protein 10 g, Total fat 0 g, Carbohydrate 63 g.
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.

Simplified Standard Format : -

(with nutrient-related claims and/or additional nutrition information; e.g. Vitamin C)

Nutrition Information	
Per 100 g	
Energy	290 kcal
Protein	10 g
Total fat	0 g
Carbohydrate	63 g
Vitamin C	30 mg
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.	

Simplified Horizontal Format : -

(with nutrient-related claims and additional nutrition information; e.g., Vitamin C)

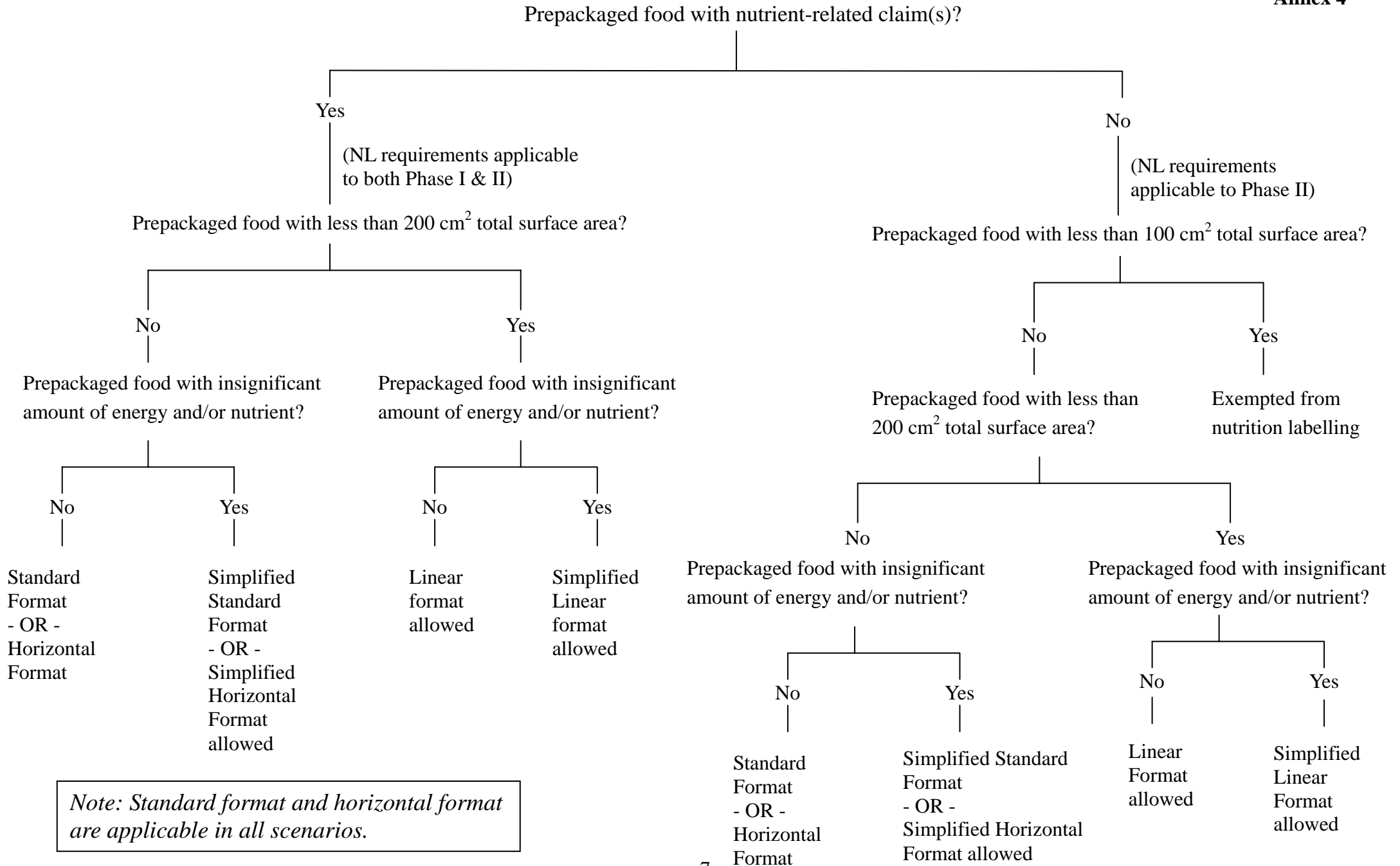
Nutrition Information	Amount	Amount
Energy	290 kcal	Carbohydrate 63 g
Protein	10 g	Vitamin C 30 mg
Total fat	0 g	
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.		

Simplified Linear Format : -

(with nutrient-related claims and additional nutrition information; e.g., Vitamin C)

Nutrition Information per 100g
Energy 290 kcal, Protein 10 g, Total fat 0 g, Carbohydrate 63 g, Vitamin C 30 mg.
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, dietary fibre, sodium or calcium.

Decision tree for labelling format



Note: Standard format and horizontal format are applicable in all scenarios.