



# Kids are sweet enough.

## ADDED SUGAR LABELLING

### REFORMS TO IMPROVE CONSUMER AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING OF HARMFUL SUGARS

#### Key Messages

- Consumers should be able to easily identify sugars that are harmful to health when looking at a food label.
- There is growing concern around the impact of sugar on health, in particular free sugars.
- Free Sugars are all sugars, except those found in whole fruits and vegetables and dairy products. That means that processed fruit sugars, like fruit juice or fruit paste, are free sugars just like cane sugar and honey are.
- When consumed in excess all free sugars are linked to poor diets, obesity and risk of non-communicable diseases.
- Food labels do not currently distinguish between intrinsic sugars (that are not harmful to health) and free sugars (that are harmful to health).
- Labelling reforms are needed to better inform consumers about sugars that are harmful to health.
- The definition of ‘added sugar’ is currently being considered by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (the body that sets food standards) and should be updated to include **all** sugars that are harmful to health (free sugars).
- ‘Added sugar’ should then be required to be a separate item on the Nutritional Information Panel on the back of food packaging to enable consumers to accurately identify harmful sugars in a product.

#### **Food labels should accurately inform consumers about all sugars that are harmful to health.**

Consumers should be able to read the information on a product and get accurate information about sugars that are harmful to health.

There is a growing scientific and community concern around the impact of sugar on health, and in particular the impact of excess free sugar consumption on health.

Free sugars are all sugars that are **not** found in whole fruits, vegetables or dairy products. This includes sources of sugar from sugar cane, honey and syrups as well as concentrated fruit sugars like pastes, concentrates and juices that are often used in foods for young children.

ALL free sugars consumed in excess are associated with poor dietary quality, obesity and risk of non-communicable diseases.<sup>i,ii</sup>

## **Food labels do not currently distinguish between intrinsic sugars and sugars that are harmful to health (free sugars) and many Australians consume free sugars in excess of recommended limits**

The presence of free sugars is not easily identifiable to shoppers as food labels disclose only 'Total Sugar'. This means that sugar from unprocessed fruit, vegetables and dairy ingredients are displayed together with free sugars. For example, in a strawberry yoghurt it is not possible for a shopper to know how much sugar is from whole strawberries and milk (naturally occurring and not posing any health risk) and how much is from free sugars added during processing (strawberry juice and cane sugar).

The World Health Organisation recommends that intakes of free sugars make up equal or less than 10% of total energy intake.<sup>iii</sup> In Australia, 72% of school age children (4-18 years of age) and 47% of adults (aged 19-71 years of age) exceed this recommendation.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Sugar labelling is currently under consideration**

Reforms are needed to better inform consumers about sugars that are harmful to health.

The labelling of 'added sugar' is currently under consideration by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). As part of this FSANZ are considering whether:

- a new definition of 'added sugar' should be developed; and
- 'added sugar' should be separately itemised on food labels.

Initial consultation with key stakeholders has been undertaken and the outcomes of this have not yet been published.

### **A fit for purpose definition of 'added sugar'**

For a definition of 'added sugar' to be fit for the purpose, the definition must capture all sugars that are harmful to health, which means all free sugars.

### **'Added sugars' should be separately itemised on food labels**

'Added sugar' should be separately itemised on food labels. This would enable consumers to make informed choices in support of the dietary guidelines and to monitor all sources of harmful sugars in their diets.

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<sup>i</sup> Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases: report of a WHO Study Group. WHO Technical Report Series 797. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1990 ([http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/obesity/WHO\\_TRS\\_797/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/obesity/WHO_TRS_797/en/), accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases: report of a Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation. WHO Technical Report Series, No. 916. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2003 ([http://whqlibdoc.who.int/trs/WHO\\_TRS\\_916.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/trs/WHO_TRS_916.pdf), accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>iii</sup> Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015.

<sup>iv</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Nutrition across the life stages. Canberra, Australia 2018. Supplementary table 19.