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PRESS RELEASE

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Simpler labelling for healthier choices

Consumers are getting more and more confused by the proliferation of simplified labelling initiatives. This morning Dorette Corbey (MEP) and BEUC presented the European Commission with the conclusions of a multi-stakeholder discussion group on how to make food labels easier to understand.

It is important that consumers can make healthy decisions quickly and easily. Many of us shop in a hurry and don't have time to look at the nutrition information in much detail. It can be complicated to find out how much fat, sugar and salt foods contain. In the context of increasing obesity, and the upcoming review of EU labelling legislation, BEUC, with the support of Mrs Corbey, launched a multi-stakeholder discussion group including representatives of national governments, industry, retailers and academia.

The group looked at research studies and sales data from a number of countries focusing on different simplified labelling schemes¹. It explored various options for harmonised simplified labelling and agreed² on some important conclusions.

EU-wide simplified labelling schemes at a glance

Aim To help consumers choose a healthy diet by providing at-a-glance effective and easy to understand information on the nutritional content of foods and to be an incentive for producers to reformulate their products in favour of healthier options.

Format The simplified labelling should be clear, understandable, on the front of the pack and in addition to back of pack nutrition information. Front of pack simplified labelling should take into account a small number of nutrients (e.g. total fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt) but should not be limited to a calorie logo. It should also provide consumers with an interpretative element to help them make sense of the numerical information.

Principles It will have to be based on robust, comparable and peer-reviewed consumer research, endorsed by a credible independent body and be subject to a consistent evaluation of its performance. The nutritional criteria used in the scheme should be developed by the EFSA in consultation with stakeholders.

The full report and conclusions can be found on www.beuc.org

¹ These studies were carried out in the UK, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and Germany by the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA), the French Ministry of Agriculture (DGAL) and French consumer organisation (CLCV), Unilever, ASDA/Walmart, Sainsbury's and Tesco. Additional data considered by the group were submitted by the European Food Information Council (EUFIC), McDonalds and the European Heart Network (EHN).

² With the exception of Unilever