

Voluntary Front of Pack Signpost Labelling Scheme for the UK

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I am pleased to submit a response to the above consultation on behalf of the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI).

NFPI support the submission to this consultation by the Children's Food Bill Campaign which is co-ordinated by *Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming* (please see www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk).

We warmly welcome and support the Food Standard Agency's (FSA) commitment to developing a front of the pack signposting scheme to help consumers make healthier choices.

NFPI research shows that parents welcome both clear and honest labelling on food packaging and health warnings on foods high in salt, sugar and fat content. Consistency and applying the labelling system to all pre-packaged foods would enable busy parents to easily identify healthy foods. Therefore NFPI supports the FSA's recommendation for a traffic light format for front of pack labelling.

While we support the proposal that the words 'Food Standards Agency' and 'eatwell.gov.uk' be included on the signpost itself, research with parents shows that parents are reluctant to follow government advice if it is presented in a standalone format and prefer the additional 'parent-friendly' information, such as tried and tested methods, that recommendations by other parents offers. We suggest, therefore, that parents be signposted further through the FSA and Eatwell websites to more sources of parent-friendly information such as the new



family friendly food guide for parents, available now for downloading at www.nfpi.org Based on the experiences of over 100 parents who were asked about what works for busy families when choosing and cooking food, it includes sections on

- pester power: marketing to children, talking to your child about advertising, tips from parents for avoiding supermarket tantrums
- talking to your child's school: about school meals, healthy eating and vending machines
- whether healthy eating is more expensive: information on buying fresh fruit and vegetables on a budget.

The NFPI report *Hard Sell, Soft Targets?* (NFPI, 2004) details and analyses the results of a MORI poll which found that 84% of parents felt that companies targeted their children too much. Parents were particularly irritated at the massive growth and ubiquity of product tie-ins, often arising from TV programmes. Parents were dismayed at the way in which marketing encouraged spending, a throw away mentality and dissatisfaction. Parents felt under pressure to make certain purchases because of what their children had seen the items on television or in the shops. NFPI welcomes the proposal to introduce a voluntary front of pack signpost labelling scheme for the UK as a first step towards protecting children from targeted marketing and advertising.

Yours sincerely

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