Health Star Rating (HSR) system in Australia and New Zealand

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Labelling in Australia & New Zealand

- Mandatory back-of-pack Nutrition Information Panel since 2002
- Independent review of food labelling law and policy 2009-11
  - Recommendation 50: That an interpretative front-of-pack labelling system be developed that is reflective of .... agreed public health priorities
- HSR adopted by Australian and New Zealand governments in 2014
  - Voluntary interpretive front-of-pack labelling system
  - Rates foods from ½ star to 5 stars, with 5 stars being most healthy
  - Scoring algorithm awards a star rating based on the quantity of specific food components within the product
    - Energy, saturated fat, total sugars, sodium, protein, dietary fibre, fruit vegetables nuts and legumes (FVNL) and, for some products, calcium
Label hierarchy

1. Energy icon + health star rating + 3 prescribed nutrient icons + 1 optional nutrient icon
2. Energy icon + health star rating + 3 prescribed nutrient icons
3. Energy icon + health star rating
4. Health star rating
5. Energy icon

It is the responsibility of food companies to determine which presentation format is most suitable for their products, based on available pack size and label space.
Uptake of HSR system over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia: Any HSR format</strong> (n, % all products)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>363 (3%)</td>
<td>2,031 (14%)</td>
<td>3,580 (~25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia: Energy icon only</strong> (n, % all HSR-labelled products)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31 (9%)</td>
<td>112 (5.5%)</td>
<td>349 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Zealand: Any HSR format</strong> (n, % all products)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37 (0.3%)</td>
<td>788 (5.5%)</td>
<td>2,065 (15%)</td>
<td>2,997 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Zealand: Energy icon only</strong> (n, % all HSR-labelled products)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>254 (12%)*</td>
<td>452 (15%)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Predominantly non-alcoholic beverages and confectionery
In 2017, just 3/26 major Australian manufacturers displayed HSR ratings that reflected their full product range.
Impact on reformulation

- Commonly believed that front-of-pack labelling systems promote healthier food reformulation
  - Choices logo, Tick programme, menu labelling, TFA labelling
- However most studies are simple ‘before and after’ evaluations that don’t take account of wider changes to the food supply
- Early data from NZ (simple ‘before and after’, 2014-2016) suggested that HSR was driving food reformulation
- However, more recent, rigorous analysis comparing changes over time between HSR-labelled and unlabelled products found minimal evidence of HSR-driven reformulation (2% reduction in sodium)
- The voluntary nature of HSR (selective application to already healthier foods) may mean that reformulation is not a manufacturer priority
Impact on consumer behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Lower 95% CI</th>
<th>Upper 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent label users (n=423)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLL v NIP</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>-2.63</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSR v NIP</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>-2.97</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All participants (N=1,357)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLL v NIP</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSR v NIP</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths of HSR system

- Simple format - well understood by consumers
- Rates overall nutritional profile of foods and provides holistic rating
- Scoring system adapted from UK NPM and FSANZ NPSC systems
- Can support/strengthen other nutrition policies e.g. Healthy Food Policies for hospitals and schools
Weaknesses of HSR system

- Voluntary – selective use by industry
- Non-interpretive energy icon only option used predominantly on confectionery and beverages
- Perceived non-alignment of HSR with Dietary Guidelines
  - Some products get high star ratings despite being non-core foods e.g. high sugar breakfast cereals
  - Reduces consumer and public health trust in the system
- Lack of understanding by stakeholders of detailed workings of HSR algorithm/calculator
  - Feeds speculation of undue industry influence in its creation
- No performance measures agreed at time of implementation
  - No agreement on how success/failure of the system is defined
5-year review

- Label implementation and consistency with the HSR system style guide
- Consumer awareness and ability to use the HSR system correctly
- Nutrient status of products carrying an HSR system label
- How well the objectives of the HSR system have been met
- Options to improve and continue implementation of the system
- The HSR Calculator
- Any issues raised with the HSR system over the 5-year period