

Is it yoghurt or is it a dessert?

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A reduction in dietary intakes of fat, saturated fat and sugar is recommended in Ireland where 3–5 daily servings of low-fat dairy products, such as yoghurts, are advised⁽¹⁾. The wide varieties of yoghurts available on the Irish market differ in content of fat, saturated fat and sugar. Criteria for nutrient claims can be used to develop nutrient profile criteria that cover all three nutrients and could be used to guide consumers on healthy choices. The aim of this study is to explore the application of such criteria to yoghurts on the market in Ireland.

A survey of yoghurts on sale in Ireland was conducted between July 2016 and March 2017. Data collected on 608 products included; brand/name, macronutrient information per 100 g, portion size, and nutrition and health claims. Yoghurts were categorised into 3 groups; natural (*n*43), flavoured (*n*483) and luxury (*n*82). Criteria based on nutrition claims per 100 g⁽²⁾ for low fat (≤ 3 g), low saturated fat (≤ 1.5 g) and low sugar (≤ 5 g) were used to develop the nutrient profile criteria for healthy choice. The sugar criteria was increased by a teaspoon for flavoured yoghurts to ≤ 9 g. The proportion of products meeting each nutrient criterion independently was examined. Total yoghurts, yoghurts that met the criteria (Healthy Choice) and the remainder (Other) of natural and flavoured categories were compared. The results are shown in the table below along with the proportion of products that bore claims.

	Natural Yoghurts				Flavoured Yoghurts			
	Total (n43)	Healthy Choice (n6)	Other (n37)	P Value*	Total (n483)	Healthy Choice (n120)	Other (n359)	P Value*
Energy (Kcal)	67 (46–138)	56 (46–75)	68 (46–138)	0.005	88 (43–219)	54 (43–104)	95 (46–219)	0.001
Total fat (g)	3.4 (0–11)	0 (0.0–2.2)	3.5 (0.1–11)	0.001	2.3 (0–21)	0.3 (0–3)	2.8 (0.1–21)	0.001
Sat. fat (g)	2.3 (0–6.8)	0 (0–1.4)	2.4 (0.1–6.8)	0.001	1.4 (0–19)	0.1 (0–1.5)	1.8 (0–19)	0.001
Sugar (g)	5.5 (3.4–7.5)	4.1 (3.6–4.9)	5.9 (3.4–7.5)	0.001	11 (0.4–18.8)	6.8 (2.1–9)	11.9 (0.4–18.8)	0.001
Claims % (n)				P Value**	Claims % (n)			P Value**
N	44 (19)	67 (4)	40 (15)	NS	59 (287)	91 (109)	50 (178)	NS
N & H	0	0	0	–	0.01 (7)	0	0.02 (7)**	0.003

Values for energy and macronutrients are presented as medians (minimum–maximum). Healthy Choice, met the criteria; Other, did not meet the criteria. N, nutrition claims; H, health claims. NS, not significant. *Differences between healthy choices and products not meeting the criteria were assessed using Mann-Whitney U. **Differences between proportion of claims was assessed using Chi-Square and Fishers Exact.

None of the luxury yoghurts met the criteria for healthy choice nor did they have any claims. As expected, natural and flavoured yoghurts meeting the criteria were significantly lower in fat, saturated fat and sugar. Half of all yoghurts bore claims but there was no difference in terms of meeting healthy choice criteria. Only 7 yoghurts bore nutrition and health claims and none of these met the healthy choice criteria. The proportions of products meeting the criteria for fat, saturated fat and sugar were 47 %, 42 % and 40 % (natural) and 72 %, 54 % and 37 % (flavoured) respectively indicating the sugar criteria was most limiting.

This study showed that nutrient profile criteria can be used to guide consumers on healthy choices. Without such criteria, nutrition and health claims can be misleading. The lack of distinction in EU food legislation between added sugar and natural sugar, such as lactose, may adversely affect yoghurts in particular, as the most limiting criteria for healthy choice was sugar. This needs to be considered in developing criteria guiding consumers on healthy choices.

1. Healthy Ireland (2016) The Food Pyramid. www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/What-is-a-balanced-diet/The-Food-Pyramid.aspx (Accessed January 2017).
2. European Commission (2006) Regulation No 1924/2006 on Nutrition and Health Claims made on food. [www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Cor_Reg1924_2006\(1\).pdf](http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Cor_Reg1924_2006(1).pdf) (Accessed March 2017).