

Impact of the front-of-pack 5-colour nutrition label (5-CNL) on the nutritional quality of purchases: an experimental study

Given the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases around the world, nutrition has been identified as a key modifiable risk factor to try and reduce that trend. To improve nutrition-related behaviours, front-of-pack nutrition labelling has been identified as a potential effective tool. It is no surprise that many governments have included front-of-pack nutrition labelling as part of their national nutritional frameworks. The French Ministry of Health is one of them. Despite a lack of specificity regarding the label itself, it defined a “the 5-Colour Nutrition label (5-CNL), a five-category colour-coded summary system.” The objective of this study was “to investigate the impact of the 5-CNL on the nutritional quality of purchases in an experimental supermarket environment reproducing a physical grocery shop.”

This experimental study established three different conditions: (i) control situation with no specific front-of-pack nutrition label on products; (ii) intervention number 1: introduction of the 5-CNL as a front-of-pack nutrition labelling on all food products with no additional information for the consumer; and (iii) intervention number 2: introduction of the 5-CNL front-of-pack nutrition label on all food products with consumer information. A total of 901 participants were included in the study. Overall, the results highlighted that “an intervention combining the introduction of the 5-CNL front-of-pack nutrition label and a communication leaflet explaining its use was associated with a higher nutritional quality of the purchases for sweet biscuits.” Furthermore, it seemed like the understanding of the label was significantly greater among those who also received the communication leaflet. Overall, the study suggests that “the 5-CNL front-of-pack nutrition label may lead to healthier food purchases in some food categories such as sweet biscuits.” The legibility of the label and its ability for it to convey information in a quick, direct way may be beneficial.

Reference: Julia, C. et al. Impact of the front-of-pack 5-colour nutrition label (5-CNL) on the nutritional quality of purchases: an experimental study. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*. 2016;13(1):101. doi: [10.1186/s12966-016-0416-4](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-016-0416-4)