

Abstract

Food Labels: Trends in Use of Nutrition and Health Claims on New Zealand Foods and Beverages [†]

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Abstract: Nutrition and health claims have been regulated by Standard 1.2.7 of the Food Standards Code since 2016. Standard 1.2.7 was introduced in 2013, with a three-year transition period. This study aims to evaluate the impact of Standard 1.2.7 by a) identifying the number of nutrition and health claims across 16 product categories, and b) identifying changes in the use of claims since the introduction of the Standard by comparing the present findings against those of previous similar surveys (in 2014/15 and 2016/7). Packaged food labels (700) were randomly selected from 16 prespecified categories in GS1 NZ's On Pack label database, representative of foods and beverages available in New Zealand retail. Labels were assessed for the presence of nutrition and health claims, and against regulations. A total of 44% of products had at least one nutrition content claim (NCC) or general level health claim (GLHC). Since 2016/17, the proportion of products carrying claims increased among the categories "meat and meat products", "dairy and dairy products" and "eggs". Among the remaining 13 categories, the proportion of claims decreased or remained the same. NCCs appeared in 43% of products, but among categories this ranged from 10% (alcohol) to 70% (special-purpose foods). The three most common types of NCCs (in descending order) were about vitamins (mostly vitamin C and B vitamins), "gluten free" and minerals (mostly iron and calcium). In comparison with 2016/17, NCCs regarding vitamins, minerals, sugar and protein were more common, while NCCs for dietary fibre, sodium and fat (including cholesterol) were less common. "Gluten free claims" remain consistently popular. Individual use of GLHCs has increased since 2016/17 (6% compared with 3%), with the highest numbers in "special purpose foods" (40%). Further analysis of these survey data will reveal the proportion of claims that meet the regulatory requirements and identify areas requiring further guidance.

Keywords: health claims; nutrition content claims; food industry; packaged foods; food regulation



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