



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Fermented (yogurt) drinks

A supplementary report to the sugar reduction guidelines, outlining the drinks included and separate guidelines set

January 2019

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Executive summary

This technical report details the inclusion of sweetened fermented (yogurt) drinks (for example yogurt drinks, kefirs, lassis, pre and probiotic drinks), into Public Health England's (PHE's) sugar reduction programme which it leads on behalf of government. These drinks form a sub category to the yogurts and fromage frais category of the sugar reduction programme. This technical report presents the reduction and reformulation ambition and guidelines for fermented (yogurt) drinks, including the analysis of 2017 baseline sugar levels, a maximum calorie guideline for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion and timelines for achieving the ambition. This report provides supplementary guidelines to [PHE's Sugar Reduction: Achieving the 20%](#) and should be read alongside it.

Fermented (yogurt) drinks were part of the programme of extensive discussion and consultation with the food and drink industry and non-governmental organisations, when PHE was developing the milk based drinks guidance (July 2017- February 2018). During this stakeholder engagement, feedback on the composition and similarity between fermented (yogurt) drinks and yogurts confirmed PHE's final decision on where these drinks should be categorised in the sugar reduction programme. For further information on the general feedback themes provided by stakeholders, and a table of stakeholders that engaged with PHE during the engagement period for milk based drinks, please refer to [PHE's juice and milk based drinks sugar reduction guidelines](#). The stakeholder engagement process was supported by other government departments including the Department for Health and Social Care, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The reduction and reformulation ambition for fermented (yogurt) drinks is a 20% sugar reduction by 2021. Monitoring of progress will commence in September 2019. Detailed progress reports will be published annually starting in 2020 until 2022. The sugar reduction guideline takes account of a sugar allowance for naturally occurring lactose.

The guidelines for fermented (yogurt) drinks apply to all sectors of the food and drink industry, including retailers, manufacturers and those businesses that provide drinks that we buy and consume out of the home, take away or have delivered. It is anticipated that sugar reduction in these products will follow the same mechanisms as those being implemented through the wider sugar reduction and reformulation programme. A summary of the sugar reduction and maximum calorie guidelines for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion can be found in Table 1.

Approach to sugar reduction

All sectors of the food and drink industry (retailers, manufacturers and out of home¹) are expected to reduce the overall sugar content of fermented (yogurt) drinks by 20% by 2021, from a 2017 baseline. The guidelines on sales weighted average (SWA) sugar levels per 100ml, and the maximum calorie guideline for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion are included in Table 1. Further detail on the use of a SWA can be found in Appendix 1.

These reductions can be achieved through the following mechanisms:

- reducing the levels of sugar present in products (changing recipes of products - reformulation)
- reducing the number of calories in, and/or portion size of products likely to be consumed in a single occasion
- shifting consumers towards lower/no added sugar products

Sugar reduction should be achieved without increasing the level of saturated fat within a product, and where possible be accompanied by calorie reduction.

PHE is aware that some of the food and drink industry use low calorie/non-caloric sweeteners as a means to lower the sugar content of their products, while others do not. While PHE recognises the public health advantages of lowering the sugar levels of products, the use of low calorie/non-caloric sweeteners is an individual business decision. There may be advantages in businesses gradually reducing the overall sweetness of their products but not matching the level of sweetness, if replacing sugar with sweeteners as this allows for palates to gradually adjust. Further details on the use of low calorie/non-caloric sweeteners are included in Sugar Reduction: Achieving the 20%.

The insight gained from PHE's stakeholder engagement during the development of the [milk based drinks guidelines](#) demonstrated that achieving the ambition for sugar reduction by 2021 would be challenging but achievable; and that the mechanisms for action included in the programme provided sufficient flexibility for industry to enable them to do so. Where sugar reduction per 100ml can be more difficult to achieve, businesses are expected to employ additional mechanisms such as reducing portion size to achieve the ambition.

¹ 'Out of home' covers businesses such as quick service restaurants, casual dining restaurants, contract caterers (foodservice), cafés and coffee shops, sandwich and bakery led shops, pubs, vending, retail food on the go, takeaway and delivery services.

PHE recognises that some businesses have made efforts to reduce sugar levels, or the number of calories in products likely be consumed in a single occasion, before the baseline year. As is current practice with the sugar reduction programme, industry will be invited to submit data for the 2020 progress report if sugar reduction has taken place in the two years preceding the 2017 baseline, or which they may have underway but is not yet on sale.

Data used to establish the 2017 baseline and guidelines

Kantar Worldpanel (PHE's commercial data provider for retailers and manufacturers) data have been used in the analysis to inform the decisions on the ambition and guidelines for fermented (yogurt) drinks, and to establish the 2017 baseline levels of sugar per 100ml and calories in products likely to be consumed in a single occasion. It is intended that this dataset will be used to monitor progress in sugar reduction for these drinks.

The Kantar Worldpanel data covers sales of fermented (yogurt) drinks purchased in Great Britain for in-home consumption in the year (52 weeks) to 10 September 2017. The analysis includes SWA (sugar content per 100ml weighted by volume of sales) where the necessary volume and nutrition data were available.

PHE have not used data in the baseline analysis from the out of home sector as from the analysis the view is that the majority of fermented (yogurt) drinks available in the out of home sector are usually prepacked and are similar in composition and nutrition information to products from retailers and manufacturers.

More detailed information on the data and methodologies used can be found in Appendix 1.

Technical guidelines

A pragmatic approach has been taken in making the final decisions on the structure and details of the reduction and reformulation guidelines, which have been devised to support industry to achieve the 20% sugar reduction ambition. Relevant feedback received during the stakeholder engagement for milk based drinks has also been taken into account.

Table 1 sets out the sugar reduction guidelines (grams of sugar per 100ml) and maximum calorie guidelines for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion for fermented (yogurt) drinks. This includes the baseline SWA in grams of sugar per 100ml of product, and the SWA when the 20% reduction has been achieved (grams of sugar per 100ml).

Table 1. Fermented (yogurt) drinks: summary of sugar reduction and calorie guidelines for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion

Baseline (SWA) (grams (g) sugar per 100ml)	20% reduction guideline (SWA g sugar per 100ml) figures include the allowance for lactose	Sugar allowance for lactose (g/100ml)	Maximum calorie (kcal) guideline for products likely to be consumed in a single occasion	Mechanism of most relevance to category		
				Sugar reduction per 100ml	Reduce size of products likely to be consumed in a single occasion	Shift portfolio of sales
9.7g ⁱ	8.5g	3.8g	300kcal	√	√	√

i. Values based on Kantar Worldpanel data (2016-2017)

Category definition

The sweetened fermented (yogurt) drinks that are covered by these guidelines are as follows:

- yogurt drinks, including lassis
- kefirs
- drinks with disease risk reduction claims, including plant stanols and sterols
- pre and probiotic drinks, including those with functional health claims

To note: drinking yogurts have already been included in the 2015 baseline for yogurts and fromage frais and reported on in the 2018 sugar reduction progress report.

The fermented (yogurt) drinks market is largely based on dairy milk products. There are a limited range of 'dairy free' labelled prepacked products which tend to be based on nut or plant sap water and/or fruit juice. Given their composition these drinks would be classified in the sugar reduction programme as a 'juice-based drink'.

Drinks out of scope

Plain and unsweetened fermented (yogurt) drinks are out of scope as they do not contain added sugars.

Allowance for naturally occurring sugars

For fermented (yogurt) drinks an allowance has been made for the naturally occurring sugars in milk (lactose) of 3.8g/100ml. The SWA total sugar guideline is based on a 20% reduction of the added sugar content, rather than a 20% of the total sugar content. To establish this allowance value PHE worked in collaboration with the relevant industry trade bodies and businesses during the development of sugar allowances for **milk based drinks**. Details of the calculations used to obtain the SWA guideline (including the sugar allowance value) are outlined in **Sugar Reduction: Achieving the 20%** .

Calorie guideline for drinks likely to be consumed in a single occasion

PHE includes a 300 maximum calorie (kcal) guideline for fermented (yogurt) drinks likely to be consumed in a single occasion to be achieved by 2021. The aim of the calorie guideline is to enable a reduction in portion size, and the sugar reduction ambition to be achieved. It should be noted that the maximum calorie guideline is not always the same as portion size information provided by retailers or manufacturers.

The maximum calorie guideline is based on a pragmatic approach and takes into account PHE's appreciation that there is a distinct difference between the portion sizes likely to be consumed in a single occasion in the fermented (yogurt) drinks market compared to yogurts, with products ranging from 65ml to larger portion sizes that are around 500ml. Although some of these products have a small portion size there is scope for sugar reduction and reformulation in standard products, in addition to the mechanism to actively move consumers to lower sugar varieties. The larger portion sizes give cause for concern given their potential sugar and calorie contribution to the diet.

The range in portion sizes available within the category indicates there is clear scope for reduction across these drinks and the provision of a maximum calorie guideline encourages businesses to consider not making any new products with such large portion sizes and to review those that are currently on sale that exceed the guideline.

Next steps and acknowledgements

Next steps

Industry is encouraged to focus sugar reduction for the top-selling products in the fermented (yogurt) drinks category and/or reduce their product portion size. This will drive a reduction in sugar and calorie intakes as these products are consumed more regularly and contribute more sugar and calories to the diet. Making these changes will contribute to the achievement of the sugar reduction ambition.

Detailed progress reports will be published annually starting in 2020 until 2022. Progress reports will be based on data from the preceding year, eg September 2018 – September 2019 will inform the 2020 progress report. Progress reports will include a repeat of, and comparison to, the baseline data for 2017. The data and metrics that will be included will align with the sugar reduction programme.

Acknowledgements

PHE would like to thank the businesses and trade associations across all sectors of the food and drink industry, and a number of public health non-governmental organisations, for their constructive engagement and significant contributions to the development of PHE's milk based drinks guidelines which informed the development of these guidelines for fermented (yogurt) drinks. A list of those stakeholders that engaged with PHE during the engagement period and a summary of key themes can be found within PHE's [juice and milk based drinks sugar reduction guidelines](#).

Appendix 1: Baseline analysis

Introduction

This appendix sets out the baseline analysis in detail including the data sources, analytical methods, limitations to the data and analysis, and the analytical decisions made.

Use of a sales weighted average (SWA)

A SWA approach has been used to set guidelines for sugar levels in products. This approach will also be used to measure industry's progress for fermented (yogurt) drinks.

The SWA is calculated by weighting the sugar level of individual products by their volume sales. It represents an average sugar content that better reflects what people purchase. This means that a high selling product with high sugar levels drives the SWA upwards, whereas a high selling product with a low sugar level drives it downwards. PHE has used a SWA figure to establish a baseline for monitoring the 20% total sugar reduction guideline for fermented (yogurt) drinks. The SWA approach is consistent with other categories included in the sugar reduction programme.

The SWA provides a figure against which progress can be monitored. If the guideline figures were set without accounting for volume sales there would be no impact on the average if a business heavily promoted a product with high sugar levels, for example. Using a SWA across relatively broad drinks categories provides scope for businesses to continue to provide products with a range of sugar levels.

Data sources - retailers and manufacturers

Kantar Worldpanel is a global market research business which runs a continuously reporting panel of 30,000 households across Great Britain recording details of all take home food and drink purchases, including volumes bought.

Kantar Worldpanel's sample of households reflects the demographic makeup of the British population. Demographic targets for the sample are based on region, social class, age of main shopper, household composition and household size. The data collected are weighted to provide a representative picture of total food and drink purchasing in Great Britain over the time period for which data are provided.

The 2017 dataset used for setting baseline levels for sugar reduction in fermented (yogurt) drinks covers the 52 weeks ending 10 September 2017, and includes total volume sales in kilograms/litres/servings and nutrition data for individual drinks products per 100ml/serving as well as details of pack size and number of products included in multipacks etc.

Out of home

PHE have not used data in the baseline analysis from the out of home sector as from the analysis the view is that the majority of fermented (yogurt) drinks available in the out of home sector are usually prepacked and are similar in composition and nutrition information to products from retailers and manufacturers.

Data limitations

Retailer and manufacturer data

Kantar Worldpanel's fieldworkers go into stores to collect nutrition information on a rolling six month basis but this does not update all products in the dataset each time. This means that some reformulation changes may not be picked up and reported on in the year that they occur.

Quality assurance

The commercial datasets used from Kantar Worldpanel have quality control measures built into their production process. In addition, PHE has carried out its own quality control checks of all data used and analyses.

Appendix 2: Summary of stakeholder engagement

The extensive engagement with stakeholders to inform the development of the milk based drinks sugar reduction guidelines also informed the development of the fermented (yogurt) drinks guidelines. Stakeholders provided feedback relating to categorisation, ambition, timelines, baseline and the sugar allowance for naturally occurring sugars.

The general feedback themes provided by stakeholders, and a table of stakeholders that engaged with PHE during the engagement period are included in PHE's [juice and milk based drinks sugar reduction guidelines](#). A brief summary of which is included below.

Categorisation

The feedback from stakeholders on the composition and similarity between fermented (yogurt) drinks and yogurts and fromage frais informed PHE's final decision to include these drinks as a sub category of yogurts and fromage frais.

PHE initially considered excluding fermented (yogurt) drinks that were able to make a claim under Article 14 (1) (a) of the EC Regulation on nutrition and health claims (No 1924/2006), which refer to the reduction of disease risk 'Risk Reduction Claims' from the sugar reduction programme. However following the majority of stakeholder feedback that products should not be included or excluded in the sugar reduction programme based on claims, for consistency these products are included.

Sugar allowance

Industry feedback detailed a preference for fermented (yogurt) drinks to be applied the same sugar allowance value for naturally occurring sugars as yogurts and fromage frais (3.8g lactose per 100ml), given their similarity in composition.