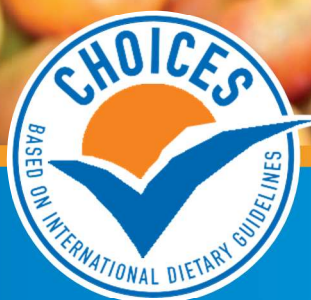
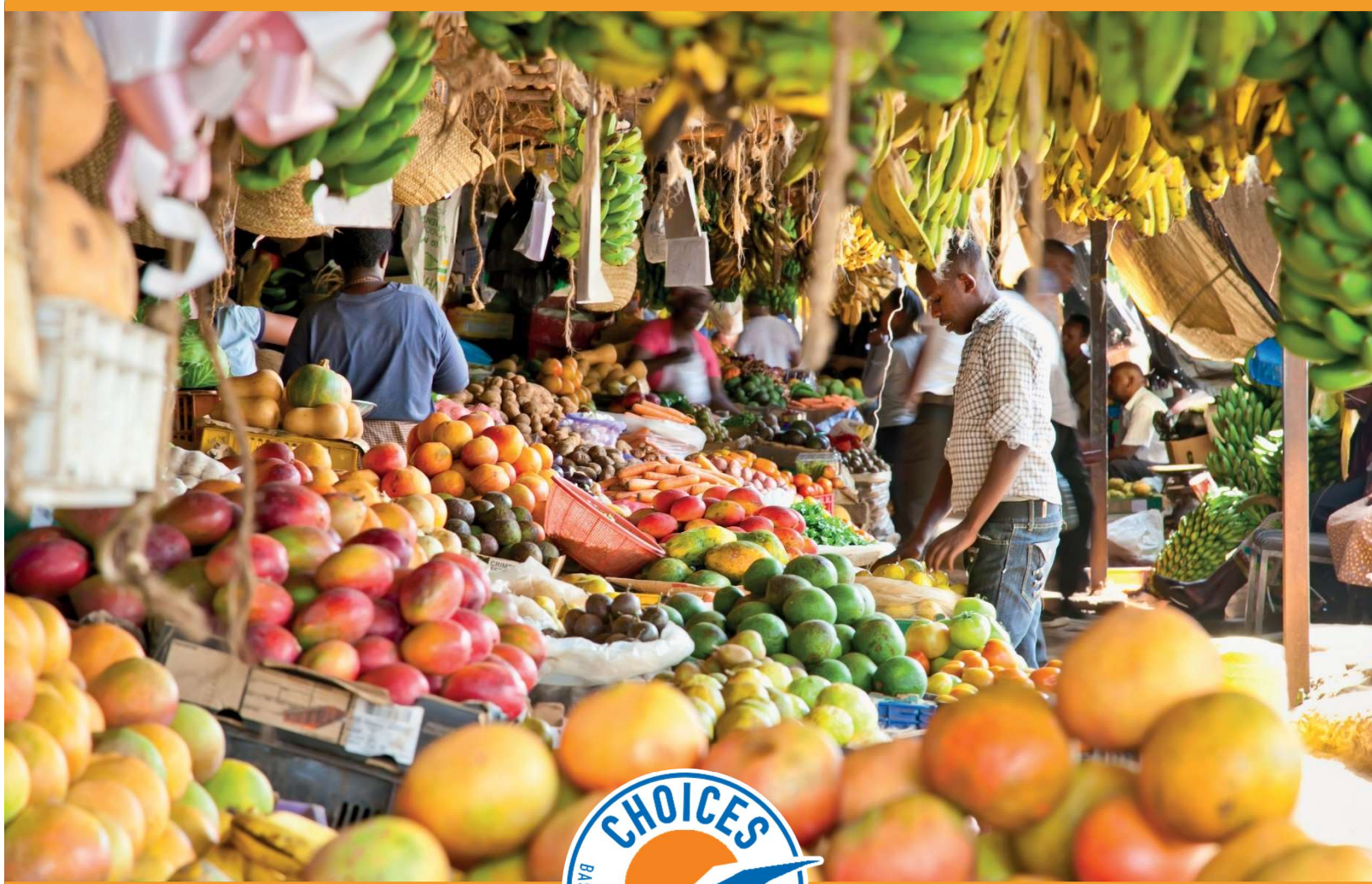


International Choices criteria

A global standard for healthier food

VERSION 2019-4



CHOICES INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

THE CHOICES INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE



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Preface

Consumers throughout the world are searching for healthier food options for themselves and their families. The fact that the daily diet directly relates to one's health does not need any explanation. Nevertheless, it can be quite challenging to select healthier food options to achieve the 'best buys'. Numerous studies show that a simplified way of consumer guidance, accompanied by consumer education and product improvement, does pay off. The identification of important or critical nutrients and their minimum or maximum cut-off values in food categories can help consumers select the healthier choice within the same food product group.

This is where the Choices International programme plays its role. The cornerstone of this programme is its international criteria. These science-based criteria can be helpful in the development of nutrition-related policies and act as guidance towards healthier food choices for consumers and industries.

The international criteria are not carved in stone but need to be pragmatic, specific, and dynamic. They are dynamic in two ways: they need to be adapted to the national context - where implemented - and they must be revised periodically to respond to global developments. The Choices International Scientific Committee has been responsible for the 2017-2018 criteria revision. The results of this independent review are presented in this document. In this comprehensive revision, each product group definition and all cut-off values of the different nutrients in all product groups have been critically reviewed. The objective is not only to update the criteria, but also to strike a balance between the different food cultures in the world.

This is a reference document for use by countries to assist consumers in selecting healthier food choices, particularly, in addressing the rise of non-communicable diseases in many regions. It is hoped that this document will be a good guide to countries. Feedback received from countries, organizations and individuals will be of great value for the next criteria revision scheduled in 2022.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the Board of the Choices International Foundation for providing this opportunity to the Committee to contribute to the development of the Choices Programme through this criteria revision.

The Choices International Scientific Committee:

- Prof. Lauren Lissner, University of Göteborg, Sweden (president)
- Assoc. Prof. Rokiah Don, International Medical University, Malaysia
- Prof. Anura Kurpad, St. Johns Medical College, India
- Prof. Ngozi Nnam, University of Nigeria
- Prof. Ricardo Uauy, University of Chile
- Prof. Yang Yuexin, Chinese Nutrition Society

Introduction

The Choices criteria form a global standard for healthier food and are developed to use as a tool to improve a population’s diet. The criteria are designed to identify the healthiest products within a category of foods, according to the slogan of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (2004)¹ ‘Make the healthy choice the easy choice’. Therefore, food products are categorized into distinct product groups, and criteria are determined for each of these product groups. As the criteria highlight the healthiest options in each food category, they can be applied for many uses where a definition of ‘healthy’ is required for the implementation of food and health strategies. For example, as a benchmark for national front-of-pack nutrition label systems, as a basis for a company’s reformulation agenda or health policies, as a starting point for nutrition communication to consumers, responsible food marketing or financial incentives.

This document presents the 2019 Choices criteria after the third major revision by the Choices International Scientific Committee². This Committee consists of leading independent food and nutrition scientists from around the globe.

The criteria revision occurs periodically, every 4 years, to stay up to date with current product innovations, consumer preferences, nutrition science and food technology. Also, the stepwise tightening of the criteria pushes food companies to keep improving their products³ and facilitates consumers to get gradually accustomed to products with less sugar, fat and salt and more fiber.

After publication of the newly revised criteria, a 1-year run-in period starts (ending May 2020), in which both the former criteria as well as the current version can be used. This period allows adaption of agreements that are based on the criteria, and products can be reformulated to comply with the new criteria. After this 1-year period, only the new criteria are valid.

CHOICES CRITERIA AND
THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

The Choices criteria specifically focus on healthier food choices, with respect to both the prevention of NCDs and other forms of malnutrition. We are aware that working on healthier food takes place within the broader context of a sustainable future of humankind. There is no healthy planet without a healthy population, and there is no healthy population without a healthy planet. This awareness is materialized in the Choices commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We don't see the SDGs as items on a supermarket shelf for one to cherry pick, but rather as a coherent and integrated set of global ambitions.

Within this broader global ambition, Choices International focuses on the goals where we can make a difference by using our expertise and experience. This means contributing to the prevention of NCDs (goal 3.4) and other forms of malnutrition (goal 2.2) in good collaboration with stakeholders (goal 17.17). As a contribution to the SDGs in general, we will seek coherence with actions that are inspired by one or more of the other goals, in order to achieve synergy. We call upon our partners to do the same.

1) https://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/strategy/eb11344/strategy_english_web.pdf (consulted December 18, 2018)
2) <https://www.choicesprogramme.org/science/international-scientific-committee>
3) Vyth EL, Steenhuis IH, Roodenburg AJ, Brug J, Seidell JC. Front-of-pack nutrition label stimulates healthier product development: a quantitative analysis. *The international journal of behavioral nutrition and physical activity*. 2010;7:65.

Nutrient profiling methodology

The methodology of the initial Choices criteria setting, or nutrient profiling, is described by Roodenburg et al. (2011)⁴. In short, generic criteria were developed based on WHO/FAO dietary guidelines⁵ and the WHO recommendations for the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)⁶. A differentiation was made between basic food products - which form the essential components of a healthy diet and should provide all nutrients in sufficient quantity - and non-basic products, which are the discretionary products in which certain nutrients should be reduced. This differentiation was based on a compilation of dietary recommendations in 22 countries (Roodenburg, 2011⁴).

Generic criteria were defined by adding 30% to the nutrient recommendations, to take into consideration the substantial differences in the level of nutrients between products, as well as the fact that many products do not contain certain nutrients at all. Studies showed that this does not interfere with the overall goal of the programme (Van Raaij et al., 2008⁷; Roodenburg et al., 2009)⁸. To ensure that consumers have access to healthier choices within all product groups, criteria were adjusted when needed. An international food composition test database has been developed to determine criteria that describe the most healthy products for all product groups.

For each product group, cut-off levels were set for saturated fatty acids, sugar, trans fatty acids and sodium and also energy and dietary fiber for some of the product groups. The selection of these nutrients is based on the relation between consumption and the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and in coherence with the WHO recommendations for the prevention of NCDs. Fiber is the only nutrient that is negatively correlated with the onset of NCDs, while the others are demonstrated to be a risk factor in NCD development. While WHO recommends the decrease of added (free) sugar, the criteria also include total sugar limits. As added sugar data are often difficult to obtain, the use of total sugar data is a practical alternative. If available, the added sugar data prevail.

BASIC AND NON-BASIC PRODUCT GROUPS DESCRIBED IN THE CURRENT CRITERIA

BASIC PRODUCT GROUPS

- Fresh or fresh frozen fruits and vegetables
- Processed and dried fruits and vegetables
- Processed and dried beans and legumes
- Plain water, tea and coffee
- Processed and unprocessed nuts and seeds
- Plain tubers used as staple
- Processed tubers used as staple
- Plain noodles and pasta
- Flavored noodles and pasta
- Grains
- Bread
- Breakfast cereal products
- Unprocessed meat, poultry and eggs
- Processed meat and meat products
- Fresh, frozen or processed seafood
- Insects
- Milk (-products)
- Cheese (-products)
- Oils, fats and fat-containing spreads
- Main meals
- Sandwiches and rolls
- Soups

NON-BASIC PRODUCT GROUPS

- Meal sauces
- Emulsified sauces
- Dark sauces
- Other sauces (water-based)
- Savoury snacks
- Sweet snacks
- Fruit and vegetable juices
- Non-dairy milk substitutes
- Beverages
- All other products

4) Roodenburg, A. J. C., Popkin, B. M. & Seidell, J. C. Development of international criteria for a front of package food labelling system: the International Choices Programme. *EJCN* 65, 1190-1200 (2011).

5) Joint WHO/FAO consultation (2003). Diet, nutrition, and the prevention of chronic diseases. Joint WHO/FAO consultation: Geneva. Technical Report Series No. 916

6) Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases. Report of the joint WHO/FAO expert consultation *Technical Report Series*, No. 916 (TRS 916)

7) Van Raaij J, Hendriksen M, Verhagen H (2008). Potential for improvement of population diet through reformulation of commonly eaten foods. *Public Health Nutr* 12, 1-6

8) Roodenburg AJC, Temme EHM, Howell Davies O, Seidell JC (2009). Potential impact of the Choices Programme on nutrient intakes of the Dutch population. *Nutr Bull* 34, 318-323.

To highlight the ‘best in class’ in each product group, as a rule of thumb, 20% of the products in the basic product groups should comply with all criteria of the specific group. For the non-basic product groups, this is 10%. Highlighting the 10 or 20% fraction has two reasons. The first is that in this way a sufficient quantity of products is available in the shops to make the healthier choice. Secondly, this shows to the food industry that producing such healthier products is feasible.

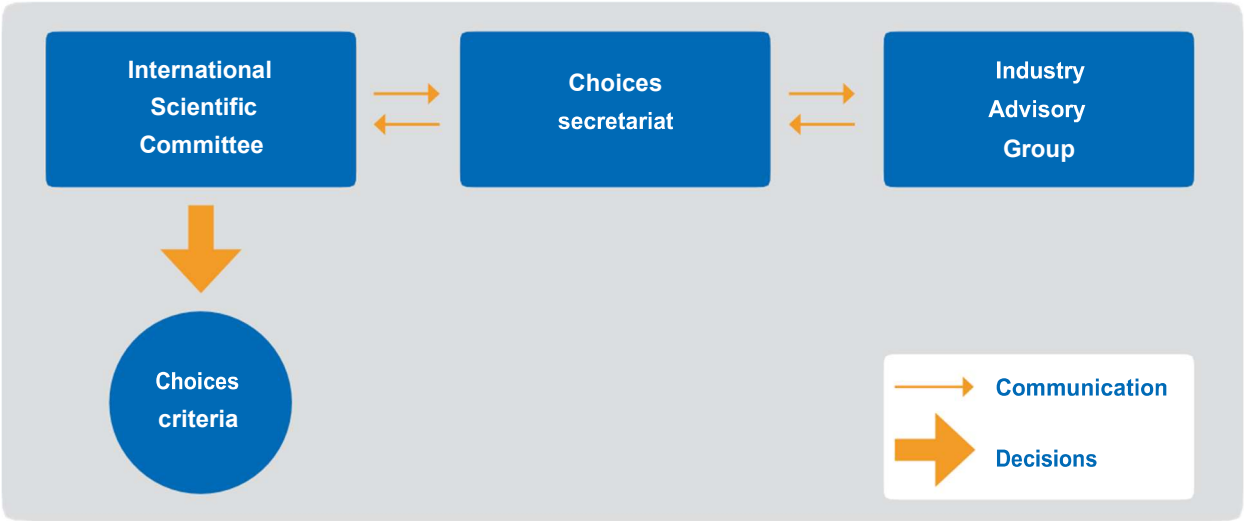
The international criteria have to be revised every four years. The general goal of each criteria revision is to find opportunities to further lower the fat, sugar and salt levels to keep up with advancements in product reformulation and consumer habits. The 2018 revision also aimed to improve the global applicability by including and balancing influences from a variety of major food cultures. This was necessary because the Choices criteria are more and more used by countries and companies in Asia and Africa.

The revision process started with the following actions:

- 1. Stakeholder evaluation. A questionnaire was distributed among experts from Choices national scientific committees, other positive logo organizations, independent scientists, NGO’s and food companies, asking for comments on the current criteria and suggestions for improvement.
- 2. An inventory was made of recent developments in recommendations for the nutrients in the criteria.
- 3. An overview has been made of the criteria of other positive logo programs in the world, that also use product group-specific criteria and a comparable set of nutrients.

Starting with the outcomes of these three elements, product classifications and cut-off levels were reassessed. Product reclassifications were considered because of differences in consumer perceptions of these products and differences in food cultures. Whether the current cut-off levels are still representative for the top 20% (for basic products) or 10% (non-basic products) was assessed using databases developed by the George Institute, consisting of detailed (English) product data from large economies spread over the continents: Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United states of America.

All decisions on these criteria are were made independently by the Choices International Scientific Committee, facilitated by the Choices International Foundation secretariat. The Choices secretariat was responsible for the preparative work for the criteria modifications and received advice from the Scientific Advisory Group - consisting of industry nutrition experts - on the technical feasibility of the proposals.



8) The George Institute for Global Health is an independent medical research institute that conducts research on preventable illnesses and injuries that are the leading causes of death and disability worldwide. <https://www.georgeinstitute.org/>

Adaptation before implementation

Although the Choices International criteria have a global relevance, they are mostly used on a national level. This demands a further specification to the national circumstances before they can be used for the implementation. Choices International wants to make the criteria as pragmatic and applicable as possible. Therefore, national initiatives are encouraged and supported to customize the criteria following the same nutrient profiling methodology as used for the international criteriarevision.

National adaptation. The global criteria should be reviewed by a national committee of leading independent scientists to match with national circumstances. Important elements to consider are national nutrition issues and related nutrition policies, food legislation requirements, food culture and consumer taste. This national customization offers the opportunity to add criteria that address certain kinds of malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies. The nationally adapted criteria will be reviewed by the International Scientific Committee.

Implementation. The Choices criteria can be used as scientific substantiation for health policies by governments, food companies, NGOs and multi-stakeholder platforms. The Choices secretariat provides comprehensive support and tools for capacity building and implementation, such as trainings and product database software. For more information, see www.choicesprogramme.org or contact us at info@choicesprogramme.org.

When the Choices criteria are used by individual food companies, the nationally adapted criteria for their market should be used or, if no national adaptation exists in their market, the international criteria are applicable.

Product assessment

To determine if a product complies with the Choices criteria, the following steps are taken:

1. The product will be classified into one of the Choices product groups. In most cases, this is self-explanatory by using the definitions of each product group in this document. In case of doubt, see Annex II.
2. The nutrient content of the product will be assessed against all the criteria of the relevant product group. For sugar, the product has to comply to either the added or total sugar criterion. Nutrient data can be obtained from documents, the back-of-pack nutrition panel or from independent laboratory analysis. As food products are from natural origin, a variation in nutrient content has to be considered. If data from laboratory analysis are used, a deviation tolerance of 15% can be used for sugar, energy, fats and fiber, and 20% for sodium.

Compliance to national legislation

The product should comply to all rules and requirements of the national food legislation. The Choices criteria only address the level of six nutrients. All other health aspects of food products, such as food safety, the presence of additives and artificial sweeteners and potential allergens are supposed to be regulated by national food legislation. By submitting a product to the Choices criteria for assessment, a brand owner confirms that the product complies with all relevant national regulations on food quality and labelling.

Excluded Product groups

The following product groups are not included in the criteria and are therefore not eligible for certification:

- products containing > 0.5% alcohol
- food supplements
- products for use under medical supervision
- foods for children under a year old

International Choices criteria

TABLE 1: CRITERIA FOR BASIC PRODUCT GROUPS

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES		
FRESH OR FRESH FROZEN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES	All fruit and vegetable products that do not contain additions comply.	All types of fresh fruit and vegetables that are additions-free and minimally processed, including freshly frozen and/ or cut fruits and vegetables. E.g.: pre-cut vegetable mixes, cabbage, pre-sliced watermelon, cucumber, bok choy, broccoli, frozen spinach (without cream), frozen raspberries, papaya.
PROCESSED AND DRIED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugar: ≤ 10.0 g/100g (vegetables) or Total sugar: ≤ 17.0 g/100g (fruit) Fiber: ≥ 1.0 g/100g*	All types of processed fruits and vegetables that have undergone further processing, excluding fruit and vegetable juices and frozen or pre-sliced fruit and vegetables. E.g.: canned tomatoes, canned carrots, frozen spinach with cream, pickles (gherkins, pearl onions, relish), fruit salads, apple sauce, date fruits, sugar palm fruit, dried cherries, seaweed, guacamole, raisins, strawberry purée, olives, mixed fruit and vegetable purées, green beans, dried figs/ prunes, fruit spreads.
PROCESSED AND DRIED BEANS AND LEGUMES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 200 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 5.7 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 3.5 g/100g*	All processed and dried beans and legumes. E.g.: pulses, peas, chickpeas, canned beans, soybeans, canned beans in sauce, locust beans, roasted fava beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, hummus and fermented legumes.

WATER		
PLAIN WATER, TEA AND COFFEE	SAFA: not added TFA: not added Sodium: ≤ 20 mg/100g Added sugars: not added	Plain or carbonated (mineral) non-flavored waters; plain tea (black or herbal); plain coffee. E.g.: tap water, mineral water, espresso, americano, green tea, white tea, black tea.

NUTS AND SEEDS		
PROCESSED AND UNPROCESSED NUTS AND SEEDS	SAFA: ≤ 8.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars ≤ 7.5 g/100g	Nuts: All ground and tree nuts and fruits perceived as nuts, such as: peanuts, cashew nuts, almonds, walnuts, coconuts, pecan nuts, pistachio nuts. Raw nuts as well as roasted and nut butters (peanut butter), salted or otherwise processed nuts are included. Seeds: All seeds (except grains), seed butters (tahini) and kernels like sunflower seed, linseed, poppy seed, pine nuts, and sesame seeds.

SOURCES OF COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES		
PLAIN TUBERS USED AS STAPLE	All products without additions comply	Minimally processed, non-flavored/ additions-free tubers, used as staple food. E.g.: peeled, sliced and/or chilled potatoes, cassava, sweet potatoes, yam, cocoyam and taro.
PROCESSED TUBERS USED AS STAPLE	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 3.0 g/100g Total sugars in sweet potatoes: ≤ 6.5 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 2.7 g/100g*	Types of processed tubers that are commonly used as staple food. E.g.: boiled/fried (sweet) potatoes, mashed potatoes, fried cassava, cassava flour, potato-flour.
PLAIN NOODLES AND PASTA	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 3.0 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 2.7 g/100g*	All pasta and noodle products as such, without additions. E.g.: plain rice noodles, egg noodles, wheat flour noodles, macaroni, spaghetti.
FLAVORED NOODLES AND PASTA	SAFA: ≤ 2.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 500 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 4.0 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 2.7 g/100g*	All processed noodles and pasta with additions. E.g.: shrimp or chicken flavored instant/ ready-to-eat noodles, pasta pesto, spinach pasta.
GRAINS	SAFA: ≤ 1.2 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 4.5g/100g Fiber: ≥ 1.8 g/100g*	All types of (processed) grains (other than pasta, noodles, bread and breakfast cereals). E.g.: boiled, dried, unpolished rice, red/brown/black/white rice, basmati rice, whole grain rice, risotto, wheat, corn, millet, barley, sorghum, oats, flour, bulgur, pancake mixes, pizza crust.
BREAD	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 450 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 4.0 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 6.0 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 4.0 g/100g*	All types of bread or substitutes for bread with the exception of breakfast cereals. E.g.: wheat bread, whole meal bread, crispbreads, knäckerbrod, croissants, rye bread, cassava bread, rolls, and crackers.
BREAKFAST CEREAL PRODUCTS	SAFA: ≤ 3.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 400 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 15 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 17 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 6.0 g/100g*	All types of cereal-based breakfast products. E.g.: muesli, cruesli, oatmeal, cornflakes, rice crispies and porridge.

MEAT, FISH, POULTRY, AND EGGS		
UNPROCESSED MEAT, POULTRY AND EGGS	SAFA: ≤ 3.2 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g** Sodium: ≤ 150 mg/100g Added sugars: not added	All types of unprocessed meat, poultry and eggs (including frozen meat that has not undergone further processing), without additions. E.g.: beef, pork, turkey, egg, game, lamb, frog legs and offal.
PROCESSED MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS	SAFA: ≤ 5.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g** Sodium: ≤ 450 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g	All types of processed meat/poultry and meat products. E.g.: spiced or salted meat (fresh or frozen), sausages, meatballs, satay, fried duck, salami, smoke-dried beef, chicken nuggets, ham, processed eggs.
FRESH, FROZEN OR PROCESSED SEAFOOD	SAFA: ≤ 4.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 300 mg/100g Added sugars: not added	All types of unprocessed and processed seafood (from sea and freshwater): fish, crustaceans and shellfish (including frozen, steamed, smoked or cooked fish). Snails are also included in this product group. E.g.: herring, cod (fresh or deep-frozen), eel, lobster, crab, mussel, and shrimp, tilapia, catfish, carp, perch, snakehead, tuna, anchovy, sardines, mackerel, scad, shad, milkfish, crayfish, cod parings, fried fillet of haddock, deep-fried octopus/ squid, pickled mussels, herring in tomato sauce, canned sardines, canned tuna, tempura shrimp, fish dumplings, spiced or salted fish (fresh or frozen), dried fish.
INSECTS	SAFA: ≤ 3.2 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 200 mg/100g Added sugars: not added	All edible insects and their larvae, processed or unprocessed, with or without additives. E.g.: crickets, termites, mealworm, silkworm, caterpillars (products).

DAIRY		
MILK (-PRODUCTS)	SAFA: ≤ 1.4 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g** Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 5.0 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 11.0 g/100g	All types of milk and milk products from all mammals except humans. E.g.: low fat milk, semi-skimmed milk, cottage cheese, low fat yoghurt, semi-skimmed yoghurt, yoghurt drink, custard, fruit yoghurt, evaporated milk, coffee cream, cream (for culinary use), milk powder (reconstituted as indicated on pack) and coffee cream.
CHEESE (-PRODUCTS)	SAFA: ≤ 14.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g** Sodium: ≤ 750 mg/100g Added sugars: not added	All types of solid products made from fermented milk. E.g.: parmesan, cream cheese, cheddar, 20+ cheese, 30+ cheese, Emmentaler, Edam, Gouda cheese, blue cheese, gorgonzola, gruyere, soft herb cheese.

OILS, FATS AND FAT CONTAINING SPREADS		
OILS, FATS AND FAT CONTAINING SPREADS	SAFA: ≤ 28.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.5 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 160 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 1.5 g/100g	All types fats and oils to be used as spreads and/or in the preparation of food. E.g.: vegetable oil (all types), margarine, butter, oil/fat products for roasting and frying (solid or liquid).

MEALS		
MAIN MEALS***	SAFA: ≤ 2.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.15 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 240 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 3.0g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 5.0 g/100g Fiber ≥ 1.2 g/100g Energy: ≤ 600 kcal/portion	All meals consumed for breakfast, lunch or dinner, consisting of two or more components which each do not make up more than 70% of the product. E.g.: pasta/rice/noodles/tubers/legumes-based meals, meal salads, burger plates, pizza, meal kits.
SANDWICHES AND ROLLS***	SAFA: ≤ 2.2 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.15 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 450 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 8.0 g/100g Total sugars sandwiches: ≤ 10.0 g/100g Total sugars rolls: ≤ 8.2 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 1.4 g/100g Energy: ≤ 350 kcal/portion	All types of ready-to-eat filled sandwiches/rolls.
SOUPS***	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 250 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 1.5 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 4.0 g/100g Energy: ≤ 100 kcal/100g	A liquid food especially with a meat, fish, or vegetable stock as a base and often containing pieces of solid food, in all preparations: ready-to-eat, chilled, canned, frozen, powdered (assessed as prepared). To be used as a meal, starter or snack. E.g.: tomato soup, soto soup, mushroom soup, chicken soup.

* The source of fiber in a product must be naturally occurring in one of the main ingredients of the product group.

** Naturally occurring trans fatty acids from meat or milk are excluded.

*** If all the components of the product comply with the criteria of their respective product group, and if the product is in line with the energy and fiber criterion for its product group, then the product also complies with the criteria.

TABLE 2: CRITERIA FOR NON-BASIC PRODUCT GROUPS

PRODUCT GROUP	CRITERIA	DEFINITION
MEAL SAUCES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 400 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 6.0 g/100g	All types of sauces that make up a substantial portion of the meal (portion size > 35 g). E.g.: pasta sauce, béchamel sauce, vegetable sauce, meat sauce, cheese sauce.
EMULSIFIED SAUCES	SAFA: ≤ 3.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.3 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 700 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 10.0 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 10.0 g/100g Energy: ≤ 350 kcal/100g	All types of sauces that only make up a small portion of the meal (portion size < 35 g) and that are oil-in-water emulsions to which an emulsifying agent has been added OR which have a fat content ≥ 10% w/w. E.g.: mayonnaise, salad dressing, dip sauce, vinaigrette.
DARK SAUCES	Sodium: ≤ 3000mg/100g Total sugar: ≤ 16 g/100g	Soy sauces, fish sauces, tamari and oyster sauces. E.g.: teriyaki sauce
OTHER SAUCES (WATER-BASED)	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 750 mg/100g Total sugars: ≤ 16 g/100g Energy: ≤ 100 kcal/100g	Water-based sauces that (1) only make up a small portion of the meal (portion size < 35 g), (2) do not have an emulsifying agent, (3) have a fat content of < 10% w/w and (4) do not fall into the ‘Dark sauces’ category. E.g.: ketchup, chocolate sauce, fruit sauce, barbecue sauce, chili sauce, marinade, mustard.
SAVOURY SNACKS	SAFA: ≤ 4.0g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.4 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 400 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 4.0 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 4.0 g/100g Energy: ≤ 110 kcal/portion	A product with a salty taste, that is used for consumption in-between meals or as a minor component of a meal E.g.: potato crisps, popcorn, shrimp or cheese chips, krupuk, salted sticks, beef jerky, mini pizzas, savory grain bars, fish snacks,
SWEET SNACKS	SAFA: ≤ 6.0 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.4 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 200 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 20 g/100g Total sugars: ≤ 20 g/100g Energy: ≤ 110 kcal/portion	A product with a sweet taste, that is used for consumption in-between meals or as a minor component of a meal. E.g.: confectionery such as chocolate, candy bars and gummy candy, ice cream, dried fruit positioned as a snack, baked products such as biscuits, cookies and pastries.
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE JUICES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: not added Total sugars: ≤ 12.0 g/100g Fiber: ≥ 0.3 g/100g Energy: ≤ 48 kcal/100g	All kinds of fruit and/or vegetable juices with a minimum of 98% pure juice. E.g.: orange juice, apple juice, multi-fruit juice, grape juice, berry juice, beet juice, carrot juice, tomato juice. N.b: non/low-caloric sweeteners cannot be added

PRODUCT GROUP	CRITERIA	DEFINITION
NON-DAIRY MILK SUBSTITUTES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Total sugars: ≤ 5.0 g/100g Energy: ≤ 40 kcal/100g	All products used as milk or yoghurt substitutes. E.g.: soy milk or yoghurt, almond milk, cashew milk, potato milk, rice milk.
BEVERAGES	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g Sodium: ≤ 20 mg/100g Total sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g Energy: ≤ 10 kcal/100g	Liquid products that are normally consumed from a cup, mug or glass (incl. products packed in portions in packaging, bottles, etc.), with the exception of plain coffee/tea/water, dairy products, milk substitutes and fruit juices. E.g.: (light) soft drinks, fruit drinks, drinks containing <0.5% alcohol, sports drinks (including powder). Note: When a beverage consists of no more than 3 components belonging to basic product groups, compliance of these separate components can be assessed for the corresponding product groups. When the separate components meet the criteria of the corresponding product groups, the product as such complies as well.
ALL OTHER PRODUCTS	SAFA: ≤ 1.1 g/100g or ≤ 10 en% TFA: ≤ 0.1 g/100g or ≤ 1.0 en% Sodium: ≤ 100 mg/100g Added sugars: ≤ 2.5 g/100g or ≤ 10 en%	All types of food product that do not fall within any of the above-mentioned product groups. E.g.: baking product, seasonings, vinegar.

Annexes

ANNEX I PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF NUTRIENT DEFINITIONS.

ANNEX II EXPLAINS THE PRODUCT CLASSIFICATION AND THE RULES OF CERTIFICATION, AND PRESENTS THE DECISION TREE TO FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF ASSIGNING A PRODUCT TO THE CORRECT PRODUCT GROUP.

ANNEX III DESCRIBES THE EQUIVALENCE CRITERIA, I.E. THE MINIMUM LEVEL OF SPECIFIED VITAMINS, MINERALS OR FIBER TO BE CLASSIFIED IN A CERTAIN BASIC PRODUCT GROUP.

ANNEX IV GIVES AN OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT PRODUCT DENSITIES TO FACILITATE CONVERSION FROM MILLILITERS TO GRAMS PER 100 GRAMS.

ANNEX I

Definitions of nutrients

This annex describes the definitions of nutrients and their applications for the Choices criteria.

ADDED SUGARS

All monosaccharides and disaccharides with a calorific value of >3.5 kcal/g, derived from sources other than fresh fruits and vegetables and dairy products. Sugars from products that (mainly) contain natural sugars such as honey, syrups and (more than twice) concentrated fruit drinks are considered to be added sugars. For example, when glucose-fructose syrups are added to a fruit product, the sugars from the syrup will be counted as added sugars.

Examples of sugars and sugar containing ingredients that are considered “added sugars”:

- monosaccharides: glucose/dextrose, (liquid) fructose, galactose
- disaccharides: sucrose, lactose, maltose, trehalose
- sugars: white sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, invert sugar, granulated sugar, powdered/solved sugar, fruit sugar, etc.
- syrups: (dried) corn syrup, corn syrup high in fructose, malt syrup, maple syrup, pancake syrup, fructose/glucose syrup, starch syrup, brown-rice syrup, etc.
- miscellaneous: honey, malt, molasses, fruit and vegetable extracts (of which one or more components of fruit or vegetables are used), fruit concentrates (>2 x concentrated) except lemon juice concentrates.

Examples that do not fall under “added sugars”:

- fruit: fresh fruit, fruit juice, fruit pulp, fruit concentrate (<2 x concentrated), canned fruit, dried fruit, frozen fruit
- vegetables: fresh or frozen vegetables, vegetable juice, vegetable pulp, canned vegetables
- dairy: all kinds of (non-isolated) ingredients, in liquid or powdered form, derived from milk (i.e. milk, powder milk, cream, yoghurt). Lactose may be restored to the original level in dairy products. Isolated lactose is considered an added sugar.

CARBOHYDRATES

The carbohydrates that are metabolized by the human body. The scientific committee decided that, taking into account the currently available knowledge, a criterion for glycemic load or index of a product would not be appropriate to include at this point. When comparing products with a different glycemic index or glycemic load, the committee did agree that the use of whole grains and fiber as criteria along with the promotion of a healthy diet fulfils a similar role but does not get caught with a factor that is unmeasured at this point and very complex to implement.

DIETARY FIBER

The collective term for carbohydrate polymers with three or more monomeric units that cannot be wholly digested nor absorbed in a human’s small intestine.

To count as a contribution to the fiber content, the source of fiber in a product must be naturally occurring in one of the main ingredients of the product group. This means for example, that within fruit or vegetable products, added oligosaccharides are not considered as a contribution to the fiber content, and that in products from the bread or breakfast cereal product group, inulin cannot be considered as a contribution to the fiber content.

The methods of analysis are as proposed by the Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC): methods 991.43 and 997.08. Calculation of the total amount of fiber is done by the enzymatic-gravimetric method based on digestion resistance. The method relies on enzymatic digestion to remove non-fibers from the product, after which quantification is carried out by weighing the residues. The committee is aware that the current definition covers mainly fibers that contribute to stool bulk.

ENERGY

The amount of energy from food that is available for the metabolism by the body, expressed in kcal. The following conversion factors should be used for the calculation of the energy value:

carbohydrates	4 kcal/g
protein	4 kcal/g
fat	9 kcal/g
alcohol (ethanol)	7 kcal/g
fiber	2 kcal/g
organic acids	3 kcal/g

PORTION SIZE

The portion size of a product as indicated by the supplier (e.g. in separate packets or as indicated on packaging). When the packaging information does not clearly specify what is to be considered a portion, internationally available, standardized portion sizes are to be used.

SATURATED FATTY ACIDS (SAFA)

The sum of all types and sources of fatty acids without double conjugation.

The scientific committee is aware of the different roles of saturated fatty acids with different chain lengths. The definition of SAFA used in these criteria makes the criteria more conservative.

SODIUM

Both added sodium (e.g. through salt or mono-sodium glutamate/MSG) and sodium that is naturally present (including sodium in yeast extract or in protein hydrolysates).

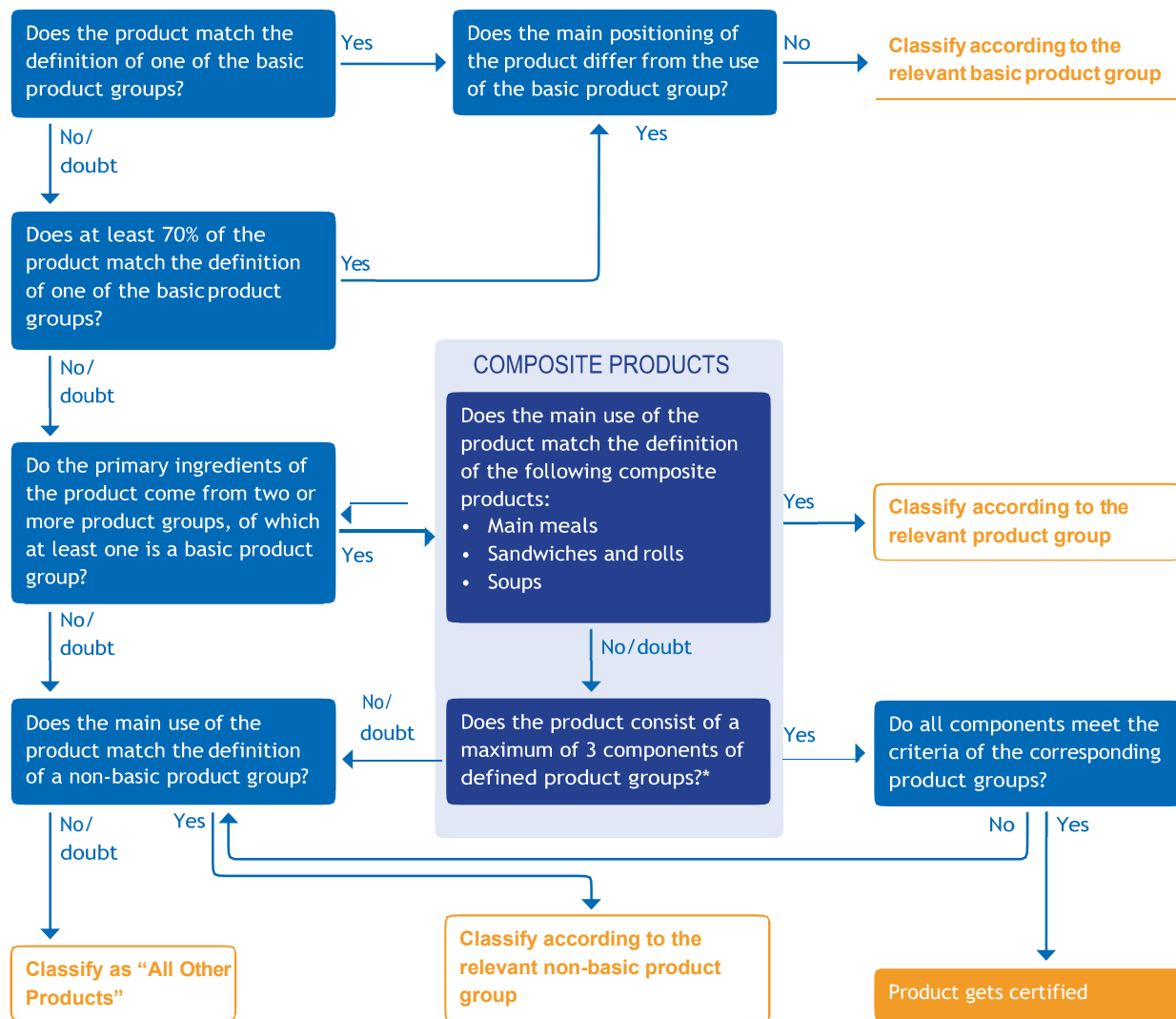
TRANS FATTY ACIDS

All trans fat other than trans fat naturally occurring in fat of animal origin. Trans fats are defined as all the geometric isomers of mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids with non-conjugated, interrupted by at least one methylene group, double carbon-carbon conjugations in the trans-configuration.

ANNEX II

Decision tree for product group classification and certification

Products are classified in a product group according to their composition and according to their intended use. For instance, a biscuit product can be seen as a processed grain product, but if the intended use is to be consumed as a snack, it should be classified as a snack. A decision tree is created to decide which criteria to use to check for compliance.



* A component is defined as that part of the food product that could be classified in one of the Choices product groups. The remaining ingredients (such as salt or sugar) will be proportionally divided to the 2 or 3 components.

70% RULE

For a product to be assigned to a product group, it has to comply to the 70% rule: it must be made up of at least 70% of the basic raw material of the main product group. For instance, a dairy product must be made up of at least 70% dairy.

In case a product consists of <70% of a component, for instance 50% of one component and 50% of another, both components should comply to the criteria of the corresponding product groups. This can be applied to products consisting of no more than 3 components.

ALL OTHER PRODUCTS

If a product cannot be assigned to any of the product groups, it must be assessed according to the criteria for “all other products”. If there is uncertainty about the categorization within a product group, you can contact your national foundation or the secretariat of the Choices International Foundation.

‘AS SOLD’ VERSUS ‘AS PREPARED’

In principle, products are registered and assessed ‘as sold’.

Food products may only be registered ‘as prepared’ if the method of preparation (rehydration/dilution with fluid) is unambiguous, and if they are dried products in powder, concentrated or condensed form. This refers to, for example, dried and concentrated soups, broths, and sauces in powder form, powdered milk, potatoes in powder form and syrups.

Additional considerations:

- Products that are to be assessed ‘as prepared’, are assessed after being prepared according to the standard preparation.
- The basis for this assessment must be the standard preparation method as explained on the packaging.
- The standard preparation method should be unambiguous, so that it is not subject to interpretation by consumers. For example: if the directions state that milk should be added, it should be clear whether full fat, skimmed or semi-skimmed milk should be added.
- For ingredients that during preparation are added to the product, the nutrient declaration can be calculated using the values from recognized food composition tables like the USDA Food Composition Databases.
- Variations on the standard preparation method (such as variations or suggestions for serving) are not used for the calculation of the nutrient declaration and are not allowed to be shown on the packaging.
- Serving suggestions that have a direct influence on the criteria nutrients (such as the addition of sugar or salt for taste) are not allowed.
- On-pack suggestions for food additions (such as suggestions to add pasta or rice) will not be taken into consideration.
- On some packages, advice on the preparation of the product is given. In the case of heating the product, the nutritionally preferred practice should be mentioned first. The order of preferred preparation for processed tubers is as follows (first is best): (1) Cooking, steaming, heating in oven, (2) Baking in oil, (3) Frying in oil, (4) Baking/frying in hard fats.
- Preparation advice for cooking in hard fats should be avoided.

Equivalence criteria

Equivalence criteria are the minimum levels of certain micronutrients in a certain basic product group. They have been defined for situations in which uncertainty arises as to which product group a certain food belongs to. All product groups belonging to the basic foods are supposed to provide a substantial amount of two or more of the vitamins or minerals listed below. The equivalence criteria are always applied for replacements of main products. These are mainly products with the intended use as the product group but does not match the definition of the product group. For other product groups, these equivalence values merely indicate the contents of a product.

An equivalent food product must contain a minimum quantity (see table below) of two of the following nutrients:

- for fruit & vegetables: vitamin A, folic acid, vitamin C and dietary fiber
- for bread and grains: vitamin B1, vitamin B6, folic acid, iron and dietary fiber
- for milk (products): vitamin B2, vitamin B12, folic acid and calcium
- for meat, poultry, fish: vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin B1, vitamin B12 and iron
- for fats, oils and fat containing spreads: vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin D

FROM AT LEAST TWO OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED NUTRIENTS PER PRODUCT GROUP, A PRODUCT MUST CONTAIN AT LEAST THE FOLLOWING AMOUNT PER 100 GRAMS:

NUTRIENT	VALUE PER 100G
Vitamin A (retinol equivalents)	70 µg
Vitamin E	1.5 mg
Vitamin D	0.5 µg
Vitamin B1	0.11 mg
Vitamin B2	0.11 mg
Vitamin B6	0.13 mg
Vitamin B12	0.24 µg
Folic acid	40 µg
Vitamin C	7.5 mg
Calcium	100 mg
Iron	0.8 mg
Dietary fiber	2.5 g

ANNEXIV

Product densities

BEVERAGES

Coffee: 1.01 g/ml
Fruit juice concentrate: 1.22 g/ml
Fruit juice: 1.04 g/ml
Mineral water with fruit flavour, artificially sweetened: 1.00 g/ml
Mineral water with fruit flavour, regular: 1.04 g/ml
Soft drink, artificially sweetened: 1.00 g/ml
Soft drink, regular: 1.04 g/ml
Sports drinks, RTD (Ready To Drink): 1.04 g/ml
Syrup: 1.28 g/ml
Soya drink: 1.04 g/ml
Tea, without milk: 1.00 g/ml
Vegetable concentrate: 1.20 g/ml
Vegetable juice: 1.05 g/ml
Water: 1.00 g/ml

MILK PRODUCTS

Buttermilk: 1.034 g/ml
Cream (sour, light) (18-20% fat): 1.009 g/ml
Milk (incl. milk drinks): 1.029 g/ml
Skimmed milk: 1.035 g/ml
Whipped cream (35-40% fat): 0.988 g/ml
Yoghurt: 1.031 g/ml

SOUPS

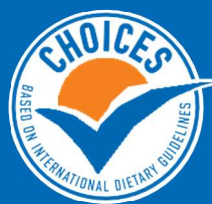
Soup, clear: 1.01 g/ml
Soup, slightly thickened (clear with pasta, tomato, mushroom): 1.03 g/ml
Soup, thickened (main course soups, pea soup, brown bean soup): 1.06 g/ml

ICE CREAM

Ice cream, low fat: 0.55g/ml
Ice cream, normal fat: 0.56 g/ml
Ice cream, high fat: 0.63 g/ml
Yoghurt ice cream: 1.34 g/ml

VARIOUS

Honey: 1.43 g/ml
Meat gravy: 1.01 g/ml
Oil: 0.92 g/ml
Sauce: 1.06 g/ml
Vinegar: 1.01 g/ml



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