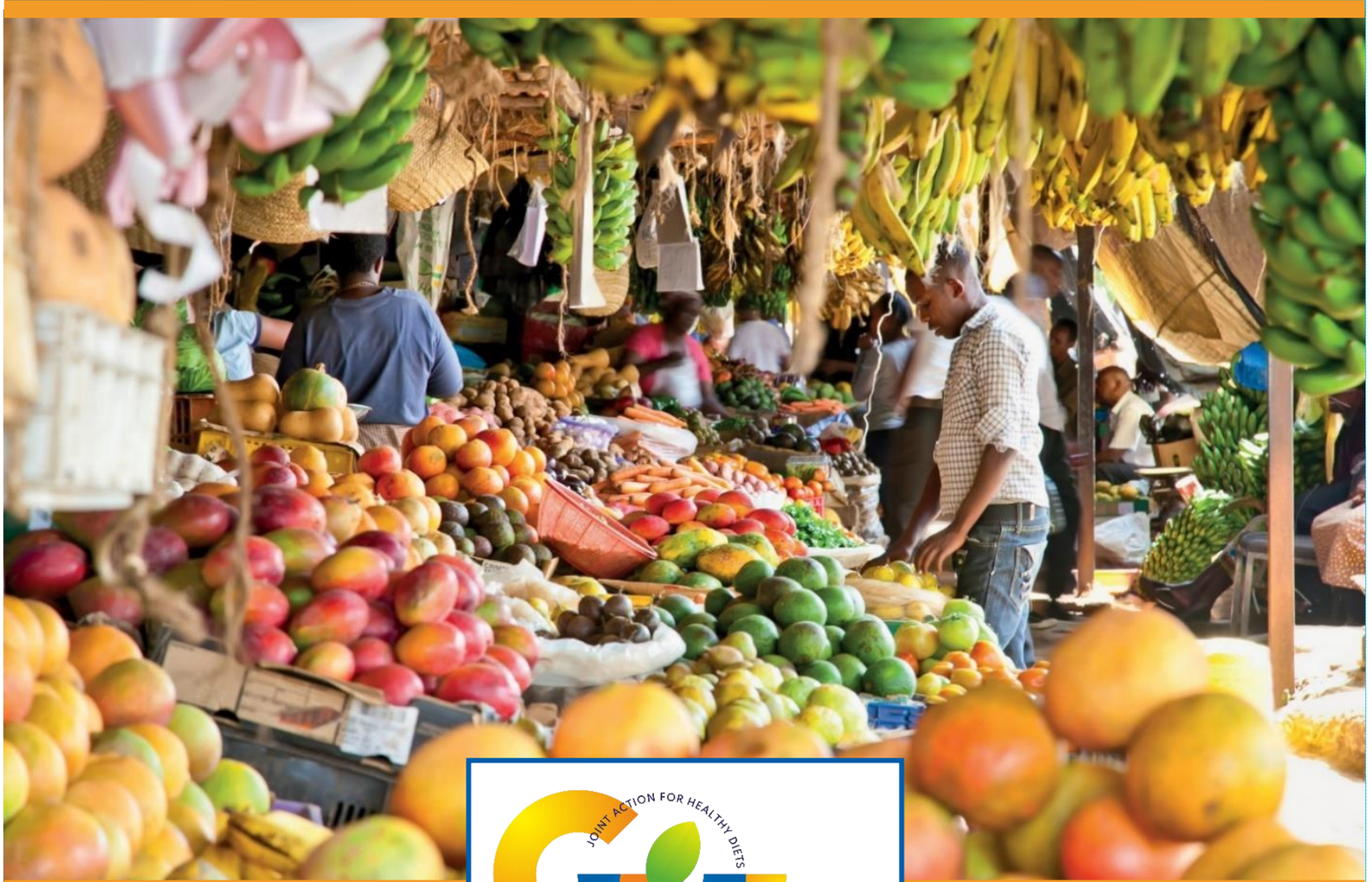
International Choices 5-Level Criteria

A global standard to support multiple food system actions

VERSION 2022



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Preface

In 2008, the Choices International Foundation developed its logo criteria, identifying best-in-class food products. These criteria have been regularly updated and are widely used as the basis for national positive (endorsement) front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) programs and as the external global benchmark for the food sector. Numerous studies show that such endorsement programs, accompanied by consumer education and product improvement, do pay off. However, evidence shows that next to FOPL, additional coherent and effective governmental policies for promoting healthier diets are needed. Choices believes such a national policy package should be based on one set of international, science-based criteria that classifies food products according to specific nutrient contents. These international criteria should be customizable to local or regional contexts, according to the food culture specificities, local nutritional issues, national food standards, and the foods available in the local market.

This is why Choices has asked us, the Choices International Scientific Committee, to extend its logo criteria to a 5-level system. Such a 5-level system could not only support positive FOPL, as the Choices criteria were originally developed for, but also graded 5 or 3-level systems of FOPL could be substantiated. Moreover, other food system actions, such as restricting advertising to children, reformulation, financial incentives and disincentives, school food environments, fortification, and claims could be supported, preferably in combination with a mandatory graded FOPL system. In collaboration with the Choices secretariat, we developed the Choices 5-level criteria and recently published this in the scientific literature. The outcome of this work is presented in this document.

This document is a reference for use by countries to assist in developing and implementing coherent and effective policy packages for promoting healthier diets. 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 2024. As the International Choices 5-level criteria are new, they will co-exist with the International Choices logo criteria (Version 2019-4) at least until 31 December 2024, or if the next revision takes more time, until one year after the publication of the next revision.

Finally, we thank the Board of the Choices International Foundation for providing this opportunity to the Committee to contribute to developing the Choices Program through this criteria revision.

The Choices International Scientific Committee:

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Introduction

The Choices logo criteria[1] 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. Thereto, food products are categorized into distinct product groups and threshold (cut-off) criteria are determined for key nutrients for each of these product groups. As the criteria highlight the healthiest options in each food category, they can be applied as a basis for national positive (endorsement) front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) programs and as an external global benchmark for the food sector. Encouraged by WHO and other international organizations, an increasing number of countries are preparing and implementing measures to improve consumer food choices utilizing a variety of food system actions; various forms of FOP labelling, taxation, limitation of marketing to children, standards for product reformulation, food purchasing standards, school feeding standards, standards for nutrition and health claims etc.

In July 2020, Choices announced its new strategy, shifting focus from industry to governments and from a positive logo to coherent sets of food system actions. The final goal of these food system actions is to improve public health by encouraging the consumption of healthier foods and decreasing the consumption of the least healthy foods. To support multiple food system actions coherently, we have been asked, as the International Scientific Committee, to extend the Choices logo criteria to a 5-level system that classifies food products into five healthiness levels. Such a 5-level system could support multiple food system actions, as is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Choices levels	1	2	3	4	5
Positive FOPL	Positive Logo				
Graded 5-level FOPL	A	B	C	D	E
Graded 3-level FOPL	Green		Amber	Red	
Negative FOPL				Negative Logo	
Reformulation	% Green / A	% Green / B	% Amber / C	% Red / D,E	
Marketing to children				Not allowed	
Subsidies	Possible	Possible			
Taxation				Possible	Possible
School meals			Not allowed	Not allowed	
School environments	Min % Green / A	Min % Green / B		Not allowed	
Fortification	Possible	Possible	Not allowed	Not allowed	
Health / nutrition claims	Possible	Possible	Not allowed	Not allowed	

Figure 1 Recommended application of Choices 5-level criteria for basic food groups

1) *International Choices criteria - A global standard for healthier food (Version 2019-4); Choices International Foundation. Available at www.choicesprogramme.org*

Choices levels	1	2	3	4	5
Positive FOPL	Not allowed				
Graded 5-level FOPL	C		D	E	
Graded 3-level FOPL	Amber		Red		
Negative FOPL			Negative Logo		
Reformulation	% Amber / C		% Red / D,E		
Marketing to children	Not allowed				
Subsidies	Not allowed				
Taxation			Possible	Possible	
School meals	By exception		Not allowed		
School environments			Not allowed		
Fortification	By exception		Not allowed		
Health / nutrition claims	By exception		Not allowed		

*Figure 2 Recommended application of Choices 5-level criteria for **non-basic** food groups to support multiple food system actions. FOPL = front-of pack label.*

To extend the Choices logo criteria to a 5-level system, we applied the same principles we used to develop the logo criteria. That means we used the same product group definitions, the same key nutrients for each product group and the same rule that a product needs to meet all nutrient thresholds to qualify (no compensation). We determined four sets of threshold criteria using a combination of compliance levels calculated from a large international food group specific database, the Choices logo criteria, and WHO nutrient profiling systems developed to restrict marketing to children. We validated these sets of thresholds through a comparison with indicator foods from food-based dietary guidelines from various countries. Some thresholds were adjusted after the validation. This resulted in the Choices 5-level criteria that can be applied to different contexts and to support a variety of health policies, to prevent both undernutrition and obesity. Details about the development of the 5-level system can be found in our publication of December 2021.[2]

The criteria revision occurs periodically, every four years, to stay up to date with current product innovations, consumer preferences, nutrition science and food technology.[3] Also, the stepwise tightening of the criteria pushes food companies to keep improving their products. It facilitates consumers to get gradually accustomed to products with less sugar, fat and salt and more fiber. The last revision was published in 2020[3]. As the 5-level criteria were developed between two revisions, both the 2019 logo criteria1 and the 5-level criteria (this document) can be used. The next revision is expected in 2024. Similarly to previous revisions, there will be a grace period of 1 year to allow for adaptation of national criteria and other agreements based on the international criteria. After this 1-year period, only the new criteria will be valid.

2) *Tognon, G.; Beltramo, B.; Schilpzand, R.; Lissner, L.; Roodenburg, A.J.C.; Don, R.; Nair, K.M.; Nnam, N.; Hamaker, B.; Smorenburg, H. Development of the Choices 5-Level Criteria to Support Multiple Food System Actions. Nutrients **2021**, 13, 4509. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13124509*

3) *Van den Assum, S.; Schilpzand, R.; Lissner, L.; Don, R.; Nair, K.M.; Nnam, N.; Uauy, R.; Yang, Y.; Pekcan, A.G.; Roodenburg, A.J.C. Periodic Revisions of the International Choices Criteria: Process and Results. Nutrients **2020**, 12, 2774. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12092774*

Adaptation before implementation

Although the Choices International criteria have global relevance, they are mostly used on a national level. This demands further specification of the national circumstances before they can be used for 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 used for the international criteria revisions.

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 International Scientific Committee will review the nationally adapted criteria.

Implementation. The Choices criteria can be used as scientific substantiation for coherent sets of food system actions, as illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2, by governments, food companies, NGOs and multi-stakeholder platforms. The Choices secretariat can provide comprehensive support and tools for capacity building and implementation, such as training and product database software. For more information, see www.choicesprogramme.org or contact us at info@choicesprogramme.org.

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

Product assessment

The following steps determine if a product complies with the Choices criteria.

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 product's nutrient content will be assessed against all the criteria of the relevant product group. Nutrient data can be obtained from documents, the back-of-pack nutrition panel or independent laboratory analysis. Food products are of natural origin, so a nutrient content variation must 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 with national legislation

The product should comply with all rules and requirements of the national food legislation. The Choices criteria only address the levels of six nutrients. All other health aspects of food products, such as food safety, the presence of additives, artificial sweeteners, and potential allergens, should 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 food quality and labelling regulations.

The following product groups are not included in the criteria:

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

International Choices 5-level criteria

Basic Food Groups

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES		T1	T2	T3	T4	
FRESH 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, and papaya.
PROCESSED VEGETABLES	Sodium g/100g	0.100	0.25	0.4	0.65	All types of processed vegetables that have undergone further processing, excluding vegetable juices and frozen or pre-sliced vegetables. E.g., canned tomatoes, canned carrots, frozen spinach with cream, pickles (gherkins, pearl onions, relish), seaweed, guacamole, olives, vegetable purées, green beans.
	Sugar g/100g	7.0	8.5	10	11	
	Fiber g/100g	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	
PROCESSED FRUIT	SAFA g/100g	1.1	2.0	3.0	4.0	All types of processed fruits that have undergone further processing, excluding fruit juices and frozen or pre-sliced fruit. E.g., fruit salads, apple sauce, date fruits, sugar palm fruit, dried cherries, raisins, strawberry purée, mixed fruit purées, dried figs/ prunes, and fruit spreads.
	Sugar g/100g	11.5	12.5	14.0	19.0	
	Fiber g/100g	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	
PROCESSED BEANS AND LEGUMES	Sodium g/100g	0.20	0.33	0.40	0.43	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.
	Sugar g/100g	5.7	7.5	10.0	10.5	
	Fiber g/100g	3.5	3.2	1.7	1.1	
WATER		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
PLAIN WATER, TEA, AND COFFEE	Sodium g/100g	0.2	0.2			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, and black tea.
NUTS AND SEEDS		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
(UN)PROCESSED NUTS AND SEEDS	SAFA g/100g	10.0	16.0	18.0	20.0	Nuts: All ground and tree nuts and fruits perceived as nuts, such as peanuts, cashew nuts, almonds, walnuts, coconuts, pecan nuts, and pistachio nuts. Raw nuts, roasted nut butters (peanut butter), and 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.
	Sodium g/100g	0.100	0.425	0.550	0.725	
	Sugar g/100g	7.5	14.0	30.0	36.0	

SOURCES OF COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES		T1	T2	T3	T4	
PLAIN TUBERS USED AS STAPLE	All products without additions comply					Minimally processed, non-flavored/addition-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 g/100g	1.1	3.0	4.0	8.0	Types of processed tubers that are commonly used as staple food. E.g., boiled/fried (sweet) potatoes, mashed potatoes, fried cassava, cassava flour, and potato flour.
	Sodium g/100g	0.1	0.35	0.4	1.6	
	Sugar g/100g	3.0	6.5	10.0	12.0	
	Fiber g/100g	2.7	2.2	1.5	0.8	
PLAIN NOODLES AND PASTA	Sodium g/100g	0.1	0.2	0.48	0.8	All pasta and noodle products as such, without additions. E.g., plain rice noodles, egg noodles, wheat flour noodles, macaroni, and spaghetti.
	Sugar g/100g	4.0	4.2	5.0	6.0	
	Fiber g/100g	6.0	2.8	1.0	0.5	
FLAVOURED NOODLES AND PASTA	SAFA g/100g	2.0	3.5	6.5	8.0	All processed noodles and pasta with additions. E.g., shrimp or chicken flavored instant/ ready-to-eat noodles, pasta pesto, spinach pasta.
	Sodium g/100g	0.5	0.925	1.2	1.5	
	Sugar g/100g	4.0	4.2	5.0	6.0	
	Fiber g/100g	6.0	2.8	1.0	0.5	
GRAINS	SAFA g/100g	1.2	1.5	1.8	4.0	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.
	Sodium g/100g	0.10	0.225	0.480	1.40	
	Sugar g/100g	4.5	6.0	10.0	12.0	
	Fiber g/100g	6.0	2.8	1.0	0.5	
BREAD	SAFA g/100g	1.1	1.8	3.5	6.0	All types of bread or substitutes for bread, with the exception of breakfast cereals. E.g., wheat bread, whole meal bread, crispbreads, croissants, rye bread, cassava bread, rolls, and crackers.
	Sodium g/100g	0.32	0.40	0.48	0.85	
	Sugar g/100g	6.0	6.5	9.0	15.0	
	Fiber g/100g	6.0	2.8	1.0	0.5	
BREAKFAST CEREALS	SAFA g/100g	3.0	3.2	3.3	4.2	All types of cereal-based breakfast products. E.g., muesli, cruesli, oatmeal, cornflakes, rice crispies and porridge.
	Sodium g/100g	0.40	0.50	0.64	0.68	
	Sugar g/100g	10	14	15	26	
	Fiber g/100g	6.0	2.8	1.0	0.5	

MEAT, FISH, POULTRY AND EGGS		T1	T2	T3	T4	
UNPROCESSED MEAT, POULTRY AND EGGS	SAFA g/100g	3.2	3.7	5.3	7.5	All 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.
	Sodium g/100g	0.150	0.170	0.400	0.680	
PROCESSED MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS	SAFA g/100g	5	6	8	10	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, and processed eggs.
	Sodium g/100g	0.450	0.600	0.680	1.300	
FRESH, FROZEN OR PROCESSED SEAFOOD	SAFA g/100g	6.0	6.5	7.0	7.5	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, shrimp, tilapia, catfish, carp, perch, snakehead, tuna, anchovy, sardines, mackerel, 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.
	Sodium g/100g	0.300	0.430	0.680	1.100	
INSECTS	SAFA g/100g	3.2	3.2			All edible insects and their larvae, processed or unprocessed, with or without additives. E.g., crickets, termites, mealworms, silkworms, caterpillars (products).
	Sodium g/100g	0.200	0.200			
DAIRY		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
MILK (-PRODUCTS)	SAFA g/100g	1.4	1.7	2.7	6.0	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.
	Sugar g/100g	6.0	8.0	10.0	14.0	
CHEESE (-PRODUCTS)	SAFA g/100g	7.5	8.5	10.0	19.0	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
	Sodium g/100g	0.400	0.500	0.600	1.200	
	Sugar g/100g				6.0	
OILS, FATS AND FAT-CONTAINING SPREADS		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
OILS, FATS, SPREADS	SAFA g/100g	16.0	30.0	36.0	55.0	All types of fats and oils to be used as spreads and/or in food preparation. E.g., vegetable oil (all types), margarine, butter, oil/fat products for roasting and frying (solid or liquid).
	iTFA g/100g	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	
	Sodium g/100g	0.100	0.350	0.520	0.750	

MEALS		T1	T2	T3	T4	
MAIN MEALS	SAFA g/100g	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	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, and meal kits.
	Sodium g/100g	0.240	0.340	0.400	0.525	
	Sugar g/100g	5.0	7.0	10.0	11.0	
	Fiber g/100g	2.4	1.4	1.0	0.8	
	Energy kcal/100g	190	200	225	275	
SANDWICHES AND ROLLS	SAFA g/100g	2	3	4	5	All types of ready-to-eat filled sandwiches/rolls.
	Sodium g/100g	0.450	0.570	0.620	0.800	
	Sugar g/100g	5	7	10	11	
	Fiber g/100g	2.4	1.4	1.0	0.8	
	Energy kcal/100g	190	215	225	275	
SOUPS	SAFA g/100g	1.1	2.0	3.5	4.0	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, mushroom soup, chicken soup.
	Sodium g/100g	0.250	0.290	0.350	0.390	
	Sugar g/100g	4.0	5.0	9.0	10.0	

Non-Basic Food Groups

SAUCES		T1	T2	T3	T4	
MEAL SAUCES	SAFA g/100g	1.1	1.3	2.5	6.0	All types of sauces that make up a substantial portion of the meal (portion size > 35g). E.g., pasta sauce, béchamel sauce, vegetable sauce, meat sauce, cheese sauce.
	Sodium g/100g	0.400	0.700	2.200	4.500	
	Sugar g/100g	6	8	16	26	
EMULSIFIED SAUCES	SAFA g/100g	3.0	4.5	6.0	8.0	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 of < 10% w/w. E.g., mayonnaise, salad dressing, dip sauce, vinaigrette.
	Sodium g/100g	0.700	1.000	1.200	1.800	
	Sugar g/100g	10	12	17	21	
	Energy kcal/100g	350	380	550	650	
DARK SAUCES	Sodium g/100g	3.000	5.500	6.500	7.750	Soy sauces, fish sauces, tamari and oyster sauces. E.g., teriyaki sauce
	Sugar g/100g	16.0	20.0	25.5	35.0	
OTHER SAUCES (WATER-BASED)	Sodium g/100g	0.750	0.800	0.900	1.080	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, chilli sauce, marinade, mustard.
	Sugar g/100g	16.0	25.0	31.0	39.0	
	Energy kcal/100g	100	130	150	190	

SNACKS		T1	T2	T3	T4	
SAVORY SNACKS	SAFA g/100g	4.0	7.0	9.0	13.0	A product with a salty taste, 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,
	iTFA g/100g	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	
	Sodium g/100g	0.400	0.790	0.880	1.000	
	Sugar g/100g	4.0	6.5	9.0	16.0	
	Energy kcal/100g	500	535	540	570	
SWEET SNACKS	SAFA g/100g	6.0	12.0	16.5	20.0	A product with a sweet taste, 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, and baked products such as biscuits, cookies, and pastries.
	Sodium g/100g	0.200	0.220	0.310	0.410	
	Sugar g/100g	20	45	55	62	
	Energy kcal/100g	220	475	510	550	
LIQUIDS		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE JUICES	Sugar g/100g	5	8	10	11	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. Nb: non/low-caloric sweeteners cannot be added.
NON-DAIRY MILK SUBSTITUTES	SAFA g/100g	1.1	1.5	2	5.5	All products used as milk or yoghurt substitutes. E.g., soy milk or yoghurt, almond milk, cashew milk, potato milk, rice milk.
	Sodium g/100g	0.100	0.110	0.120	0.130	
	Sugar g/100g	5.0	6.0	7.2	9.0	
BEVERAGES	Sugar g/100g	2.5	5.5	8.0	11.5	Liquid products 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, and sports drinks (including powder). Note: When a beverage consists of no more than three components belonging to basic product groups, compliance with 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.
OTHER		**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	
ALL OTHER PRODUCTS	SAFA g/100g	1.1	1.1			All types of food products that do not fall within any of the product groups mentioned above. E.g., baking product, seasonings, vinegar.
	iTFA g/100g	0.100	0.100			
	Sodium g/100g	0.100	0.100			
	Sugar g/100g	2.500	2.500			

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, 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 considering 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 (Eg. 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 beused.

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 (Eg. through salt or monosodium glutamate/MSG) and sodium that is naturally present (including sodium in yeast extract or in protein hydrolysates).

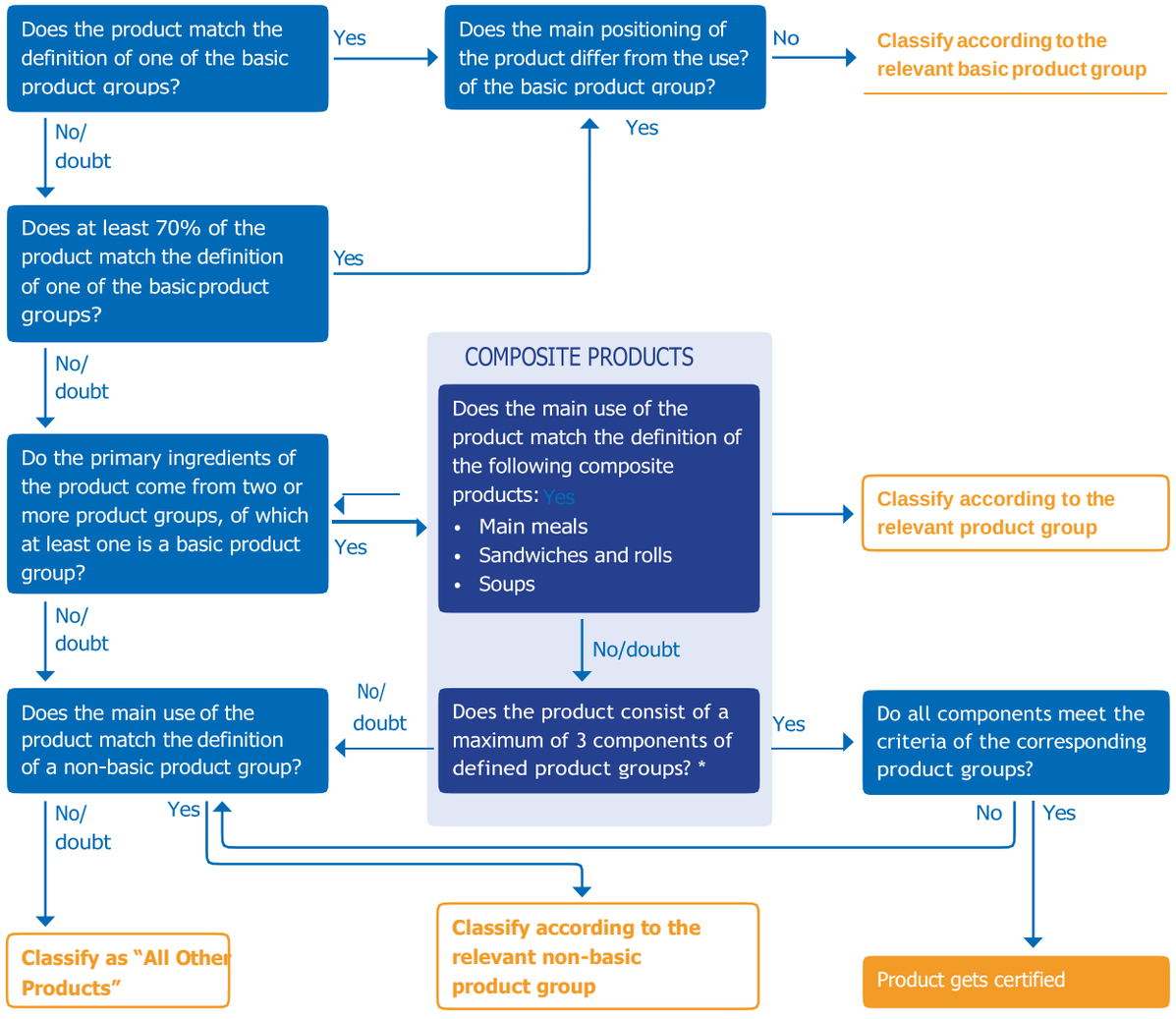
TRANS FATTY ACIDS (iTFA)

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 with 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.

If a product consists of <70% of a component, for instance, 50% of one component and 50% of another, both components should comply with the criteria of the corresponding product groups. This can be applied to products consisting of no more than three 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 un-ambiguous, 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.

ANNEX IV

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 do 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

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

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