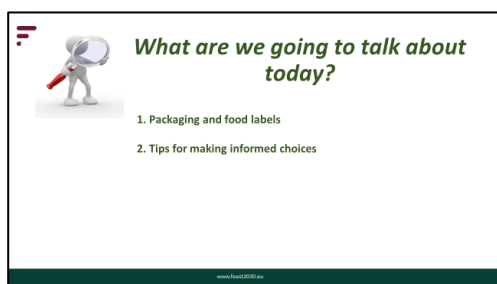


MODULE 7: IN THE JUNGLE OF FOOD LABELS




This final module addresses issues related to food marketing so as to encourage healthier, more sustainable and more informed choices. In particular, useful information and strategies for reading and understanding food labels and claims on products are shared.

Core concept: “Packaging contains important information to guide purchase decisions”

There is a lot of information on packaging, some of the most important to identify are:

- The durability of the product
 - The claim
 - The list of ingredients
 - The Nutrition Facts
- The next slide explains each of these items.

MODULE 7: IN THE JUNGLE OF FOOD LABELS



What's on a food label?

Best before: Indicate the date until which the product is expected to retain its quality. It is not a safety date.

Use by: Indicate the date after which the product is no longer safe to consume. It is a safety date.

Ingredients: List of ingredients in descending order of weight.

Nutrition Facts: Table showing the nutritional values of the product.

Net weight: The weight of the product in its original packaging.

Manufacturer: The name of the company that produced the product.

Address: The address of the manufacturer.

Phone number: The phone number of the manufacturer.

Website: The website of the manufacturer.

Let's delve into!

PRODUCT DURABILITY

- «Use by»: the product **MUST NOT** be consumed after this date!
- «Best before»: the product **MAY** be consumed beyond the date reported **BUT** may have undergone organoleptic changes (e.g., taste, odor)

CLAIM

- Phrase or word indicating that a food has particular beneficial nutritional properties
- Used by the producer to enhance the value of the product
- For example "High Fiber," "Low Fat," "High Protein".....

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This slide discusses in detail the information related to the durability of the product and thus the difference between the terms "use by" - "best before" and the information related to the nutritional claim. While the information on durability is required by law, the claim is part of the producer's description and is often used to enhance the product in the eyes of the consumer.



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Let's delve into!

LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- These are all the ingredients used in the production
- Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, i.e., from most present to least present in quantity

NUTRITION FACTS

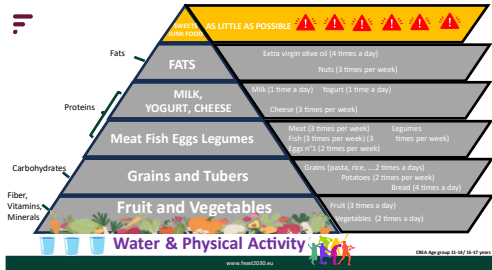
- It reports the nutritional values of the product referring to 100g/100ml
- The mandatory indications to be reported are:
 - Energy
 - Fats
 - Saturated fats
 - Carbohydrates
 - Sugars
 - Protein
 - Salt

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This slide discusses in detail the information on the ingredient list and the Nutrition Facts.

The most common mistake people make when shopping is to read the Nutrition Facts before the list of ingredients. Instead, when comparing foods belonging to the same group, it is recommended to first read the list of ingredients and then the nutritional facts. The more ingredients there are in the list, the more likely it is that there are food additives, bad fats, different forms of sugar, salt... Therefore, an easy rule to apply is to try to prefer foods with a short list of ingredients. Then, if the foods are comparable in terms of the number and quality of the ingredients, it is possible to move on to check the nutrition facts, where it will be important to pay particular attention to the amount of fat, sugar and salt.

MODULE 7: IN THE JUNGLE OF FOOD LABELS



This slide on the Mediterranean Diet pyramid is presented again to reinforce the connection between the top of the pyramid and the reason why such foods should be limited due to their composition at the ingredient level.



To encourage discussion, the whole class is asked to think about the information and elements that attract their attention when purchasing products. All responses are posted on the board, discussed and then compared with the example on the next slide.



In connection with the previous one, this slide provides some examples of strategies that are used to promote a product in order to encourage its purchase. These include the use of claims based on current fashions and demands, the use of eye-catching design, the use of elements that can evoke specific feelings, or even the use of influencers or celebrities to increase brand visibility and reach specific audiences. As a result, the propensity and ability to understand the information contained in food labels becomes a useful lens for directing attention appropriately and making more informed choices.

MODULE 7: IN THE JUNGLE OF FOOD LABELS

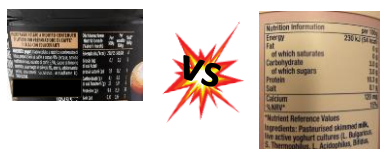
An example from breakfast cereals...



This slide and the next are intended to provide examples and facilitate the application of the information discussed so far. In this case, a comparison has been made between two breakfast cereals

First, by reading the ingredient list, it is possible to see that the product on the left has a very long ingredient list (15 ingredients), including sugar in the third position and salt in the sixth position. Therefore, it can be concluded that both sugar and salt have been added to this food, and that sugar in particular has been added in a considerable amount, since it is placed in the third position just after rice and whole wheat, which are the basic ingredients of the food. The product on the right has only one ingredient listed, so on the basis of this characteristic, it would be best to choose the right cereal. In addition, proceeding to read the nutritional table, it can be noted that the product on the left has more sugar and salt and less fiber per 100 g than the one on the right.

An example from yogurt...



This slide compares two types of yogurt. Yogurt is a product made by fermenting milk with specific strains of bacteria, so in the ingredient list I should find only milk and milk enzymes. Reading the list of ingredients of the product on the left, it's possible to detect a series of added elements, including flavorings, additives and sweeteners. These are added in order to be more "appetizing" organoleptically. In addition, the yogurt on the left shows the claim "protein", with the purpose of promoting the purchase of this feature and probably leading the consumer to believe that the amount of protein present is higher than in other similar products. Instead, a comparison of the two products based on this information shows that the amount of protein is actually the same.

MODULE 7: IN THE JUNGLE OF FOOD LABELS



To encourage students to read and understand food labels, they were asked to bring to class products they were interested in and frequently consumed.



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