



Whole Grain Working Group

IGD's Industry Nutrition Strategy Group

UK Whole Grain Guidance Note



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Contents

Introduction	1
1. Whole Grain Definition	2
Grain	2
Whole Grain	2
2. Recommended Levels of Whole Grain Inclusion & Communication Platforms	3
(i) Recommended Minimum Level of Whole Grain Inclusion	3
(ii) Whole Grain and Heart Health Claims	3
(iii) How can the Whole Grain Content be Assessed in Foods	
Highlighting the Presence of Whole Grain?	4
(iv) Key Whole Grain Messages	4
References	4

Introduction

In 2006, IGD began work to identify and examine the barriers to whole grains, and to identify and develop strategies to increase intakes. This document is one of the outputs of the group.

People who consume diets rich in whole grains seem to have a lower incidence of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Despite the benefits of foods, intakes in the UK remain low.

While there is no agreed UK definition for whole grain, the term generally refers to the entire edible grain (including the germ, endosperm and bran) from cereals and related plants.

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1. Whole Grain Definition

Grain

This term refers to the grains of Cereals and related Gramineae, used for similar purposes in foods, and other generally accepted grains such as amaranth, quinoa and buckwheat.

Whole Grain

This term refers to the edible entire grain after removal of inedible parts such as the hull and glume. It must include the entire germ, endosperm and bran.

Processing

Whole grain also includes grains that have been subjected to processing (e.g. milling, cracking, crushing, rolling, flaking, extrusion, malting¹) but only if after processing the proportions of the germ, endosperm and bran are present in the same or virtually the same proportions as the original grain.

Temporary separation of whole grain constituents during processing for later re-combination is acceptable provided the proportions of the germ, endosperm and bran are the same or virtually the same as in the original grain. Simply adding together these three whole grain constituents as separate ingredients does not constitute a whole grain and making a claim that it does could be misleading to consumers.

Different varieties of the same grain may be combined during processing and be called whole grain (e.g. different varieties of wheat) as long as the final product contains the component parts of the grain in line with their pre-processed proportions.

Recombined bran, germ and endosperm from different cereals (e.g. wheat plus oats) would not qualify as whole grain.

Examples of Whole Grain Sources:

- Amaranth
- Barley, including hull-less or naked barley but not pearled
- Buckwheat
- Maize
- Millet
- Oats, including hull-less or naked oats
- Quinoa
- Rye
- Sorghum (also called milo)
- Teff
- Triticale
- Unpolished rice, including brown and wild rice
- Wheat, including club, common wheat, durum wheat, einkorn, emmer, faro, Kamut®, spelt

¹ Malted grains are included provided (i) the amount of whole grains stated for the product is computed on the dry weight, (ii) any sprout growth does not exceed kernel length, and (iii) nutrient values have not diminished.

NB This list is not exhaustive

2. Recommended Levels of Whole Grain Inclusion & Communication Platforms

There is a general consensus amongst nutrition experts and health care professionals that as a population we should be eating more whole grains and whole grain foods.

As is desirable with all food ingredients and communications, the level of whole grain present in a food and the manner in which such ingredients are portrayed on pack and in communications, should be done in a corporately responsible manner and not mislead consumers.

Currently, in the UK, there are no agreed minimum levels of whole grain inclusion which should be achieved in foods before its presence is communicated. The IGD Whole Grain Working Group recommends that such a recommendation should exist, and by existing will help facilitate corporately responsible communication of the presence of whole grains, as well as ensure consumers obtain a significant quantity of whole grains per serving from foods bearing claims about its content.

(i) Recommended Minimum Level of Whole Grain Inclusion

For packaged foods wishing to communicate the presence of whole grain, for example, by stating 'contains whole grains' or 'with whole grains' on pack and in brand communications, the IGD Working Group recommend that foods should contain a minimum level of 8g whole grain per serving (based on final batch load proportions).

This level is not intended to support "A Whole grain Food" or similar claims which describe the majority of the grain inclusion (unless where 8g per serving whole grain does constitute the majority of grain inclusion). This level is based on the AACC International's recommendation as being a "dietary significant level" made to the USDA in October 2006.

Fibre levels: Recognising the importance of fibre in the diet, where possible whole grain containing foods should also be a source of fibre. This will not be possible in all cases, however, owing to variation in fibre levels in different grains and the level of whole grain included. For example, brown rice contains a low level of fibre relative to other whole grains. It is therefore possible to have a high whole grain food that is not high in fibre.

(ii) Whole Grain and Heart Health Claims

As of December 2006, new legislation exists, regulating nutrition and health claims made within the EU 1. This Regulation lays down harmonised rules for the use of health or nutritional claims on foodstuffs across the EU and seeks to ensure that any claim made on a food label in the EU is clear, accurate and substantiated. All nutrition and health claims, including portrayal of any benefits associated with whole grain consumption must be in compliance with this Regulation and are therefore outside the scope of this IGD Working Group.

(iii) How can the Whole Grain Content be Assessed in Foods Highlighting the Presence of Whole Grain?

In line with EU labelling legislation 2, highlighting the inclusion of whole grain on a food package (e.g. by stating 'with whole grain' or 'made with whole grains') will automatically trigger the requirement to provide a Quantitative Ingredient Declaration (QUID). This provides a mechanism for consumers and other interested parties to assess the level of whole grain present.

(iv) Key Whole Grain Messages

- Eat more whole grain foods
- Look out for 'whole' on the label – wholemeal, whole wheat, whole oats are all whole grains
- Choose brown varieties of bread, rice, pasta
- Eating more whole grain and high fibre foods forms a key part of a healthy, balanced diet

References

1. Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on nutrition and health claims made on foods.
2. The Food Labelling Regulations 1996: Guidance Notes on Quantitative Ingredient Declarations ("QUID"). <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/quid.pdf>