



The Tick Report 2011

An update for Health Professionals

The Heart Foundation Tick is New Zealand's longest-standing front of pack food labelling system. It began in Australia, has grown and evolved over the past 21 years, and has been in New Zealand since 1996. The Tick Programme has a very high level of consumer awareness and trust.

The purpose of this update is to provide health professionals with important information about the Tick, in particular the aims of the Programme, the criteria development and review process, and information about how food companies earn the Tick.

The Mission

The Tick Programme's mission is to improve the nutritional profile of New Zealand's food supply in a direction that's consistent with the Heart Foundation and Ministry of Health nutrition policies and dietary recommendations for the general population.

The Meaning

The Tick on a product means:

- It has been independently reviewed and proven to meet the Heart Foundation's comprehensive, category-specific nutrition criteria.
- It is a healthier choice within its' food category (i.e. compared to similar foods).
- It should be consumed as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.

Who sets the criteria?

The nutrition standards are developed and reviewed by the Australia/ New Zealand Criteria Working Group (CWG), which comprises honorary external leaders in nutrition, food science and public health, and Heart Foundation staff.

Final approval of criteria changes or new categories are decided by the Food Information Programme Oversight Committee (FIPOC), comprising external expertise from business, marketing, food industry and public health backgrounds. Tick licensees and food manufacturers are excluded from the CWG and FIPOC. This is essential as the information provided by industry is confidential and used solely for the purposes of understanding the food category under review.

Macro vs Micro nutrients

The Tick nutrition standards focus on improvements that can have a significant impact on the health of New Zealanders.

Setting the Tick standards

The strong, dynamic nutrition criteria behind the Heart Foundation Tick are founded in science with a deliberate dose of reality.

Across 57 different food categories the Tick criteria aims to encourage appropriate **serve size** and **decrease** levels of one or more of:

- Saturated fat, trans fat, partially hydrogenated fat
- Sodium
- Energy density (kJJs)

They also aim to **increase** levels of one or more of:

- Dietary fibre and/or vegetables and/or wholegrains;
- Calcium (for dairy and soy products and other dairy alternatives); and
- Percentage key ingredients (eg fruit, vegetable, seafood content)

Setting and reviewing the criteria for each category is a comprehensive process, involving:

- An audit of nutritional values of products in the current marketplace;
- Consulting with industry over technological issues, constraints and consumer acceptance factors;
- Establishing nutritional objectives for each category (based on consumption patterns, category nutritional attributes, healthy eating policies and recommendations from authoritative bodies);
- Considering relevant food regulations;
- Setting values for the selected nutrients; and
- Assessing these against current market nutritional values to determine the feasibility of the proposed criteria.



The main principles behind the criteria are that they must reflect the nutritional objectives for the category, and be challenging, yet achievable. If they are not realistic, then the food industry will not be encouraged to reformulate, and our efforts to improve the food supply will be ineffective. The strength of the Tick is in setting benchmarks for improvement and encouraging food companies to reformulate to meet them. Only by engaging food companies can we achieve our public health goals.

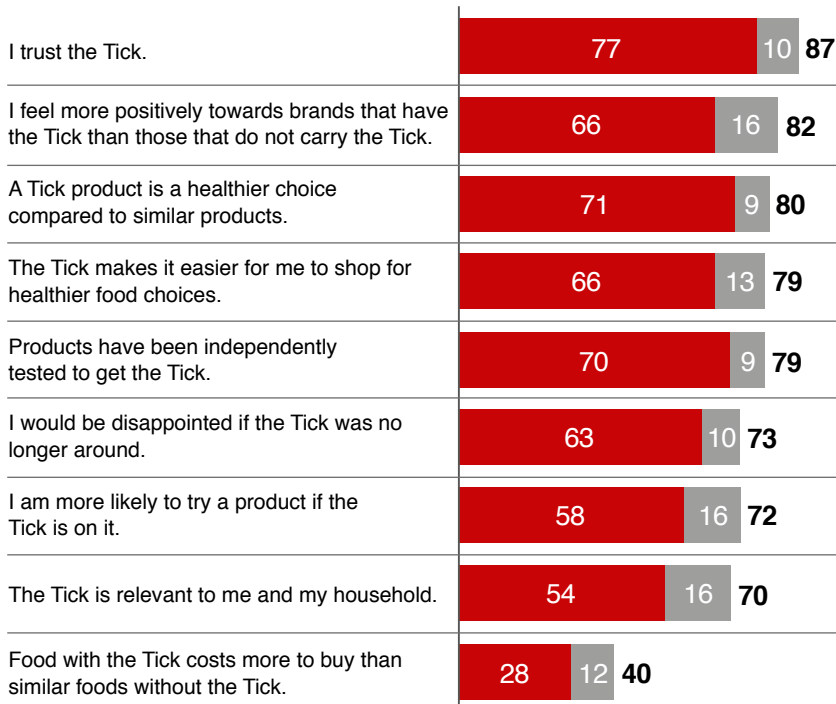


Which criteria for which foods?

Different food types provide different nutrients, so the Tick sets category-specific nutritional objectives for each criteria. For example Tick dairy products like milk and yoghurt should contain minimum levels of calcium, and be low in saturated fat and kilojoules, while Tick table spreads must meet standards for trans fat, saturated fat and sodium.

Trust (prompted)

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Tick?

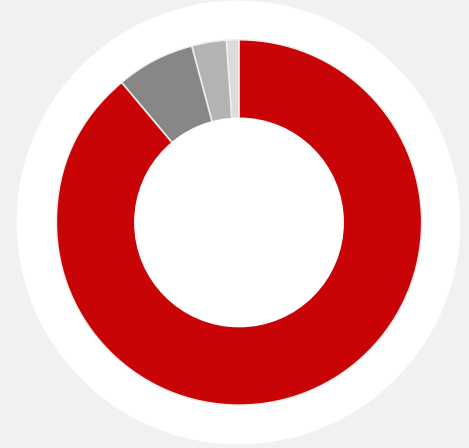


■ Strongly agree or agree ■ Agree a little

Phoenix Research, Awareness Usage, Attitudes, March 2010.

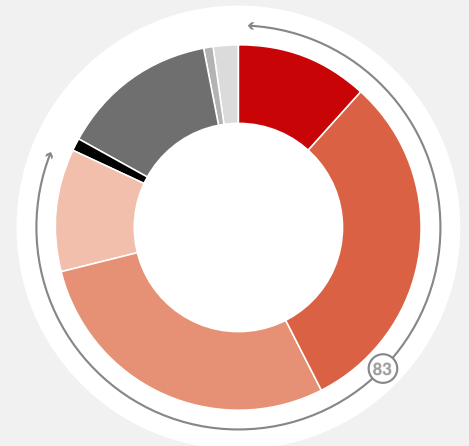
Awareness

Majority of main household shoppers (89%) have bought food with the Tick on it at some time.



Frequency of use

83% of main household shoppers use the Tick and 43% **always or regularly** use the Tick to make their purchasing decisions.



■ 12% Always
 ■ 31% Most of the time/Regularly
 ■ 29% Sometimes
 ■ 11% Just occasionally
 ■ 1% Used to but not these days
 ■ 14% Not sure/Don't notice
 ■ 1% Never/Do not currently
 ■ 2% Don't know



FAQ

Do companies have to pay for the Tick?

It is hard to earn the Tick, and food companies that apply for the Tick commit to a rigorous product approval process. Products must be tested by an independent, accredited laboratory to evidence compliance with the Tick nutrition criteria. Packaging and marketing materials must be pre-approved by the Tick Programme and comply with the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) **Food Standards Code** and **Code of Practice on Nutrient Claims**.

The Tick criteria are non-negotiable entry requirements for all food companies applying for the Tick on a product.

Food companies pay a licence fee to cover the ongoing research and development of the Tick nutrition criteria, a random testing programme to ensure ongoing compliance, marketing and communications to promote the Tick, and administrative costs.

How come some foods that seem healthy do not have the Tick?

The Tick Programme is voluntary which means that although a product might meet the Tick nutrition criteria, it is up to the food company to apply for the Tick on a product. There are several factors for a food company to consider, including available space on pack, if the Tick aligns with their brand strategy, and the resources required to commit to the approval process.

It is also important to assess a products 'healthiness' based on the overall nutrient profile of the product. Some products that seem healthier based on a specific nutrient eg low in sugar, may not be a healthier choice when assessed on its overall nutrient profile, and it could also be low in fibre and high in saturated fat.

For example the Tick criteria ensure breakfast cereals with the Tick are nutritious by limiting energy, saturated fat, salt, and requiring more fibre or wholegrains. Add low-fat milk or yoghurt and fresh fruit and you've got a nutrient-dense, energy-controlled breakfast.

Are the Tick criteria the same for all foods?

The Tick nutrition criteria is specific to 57 popular food categories. In general the Tick nutrition standards aim to reduce sodium, saturated fats, trans fat and limit energy. Many foods must also have minimum levels of fibre and calcium.

How often do the Tick criteria change?

The Tick nutrition criteria are constantly reviewed, with changes and new categories introduced to address emerging science, research and development, eating habits and nutritional issues. Where appropriate, the nutrition standards are made incrementally tougher to further challenge industry and ensure ongoing improvements to the food supply.

Is the Tick only on processed foods?

The Tick signposts healthier choices for New Zealanders across 57 food categories. In order for the Tick to have an impact on population health it needs to be present in popular food categories. Not all Tick products are processed, and for those that are, the Tick criteria focus on category appropriate nutrients to support a balanced diet. There are over 1,000 Tick products from more than 60 food companies, from fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, canned and dried foods, dairy, meat and seafood, to convenient snack and meal solutions.

For more information please contact us at:

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