



Údarás Sábháilteachta Bia na hÉireann
Food Safety Authority of Ireland

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Food Reformulation Task Force: DRAFT energy and target nutrient thresholds for use in new product development



DRAFT energy and target nutrient thresholds for use in new product development

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Glossary

Term	Text
FBO	Food Business Operator
FSAI	Food Safety Authority of Ireland
g	gram
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
Kcal	kilocalories
n	number of samples
NPD	new product development
ml	millilitres
NT	not targeted

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report outlines energy and target nutrient thresholds for use in new product development (NPD) in 8 additional food categories prioritised for reformulation. The thresholds build on NPD targets established for 13 food categories in last year's report (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2025) and were established in response to industry feedback on the challenges of applying percentage nutrient reduction targets to new products. These thresholds have been developed using the median energy and nutrient values of food products on the Irish market between 2022–2023.

1.2 Background

The Obesity Policy and Action Plan – A Healthy Weight for Ireland, published in 2016, outlines ten steps to be taken within a 10-year time frame to address overweight and obesity in Ireland (Department of Health, 2016). Step three of the plan relates to food reformulation and aims to 'secure appropriate support from the commercial sector to play its part in obesity prevention and agree food industry reformulation targets and review progress'. To achieve this, a Food Reformulation Subgroup of the Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group developed *A Roadmap for Food Product Reformulation in Ireland* which was published in 2021 (Department of Health, 2021).

To deliver the Roadmap, the Food Reformulation Task Force, a strategic partnership between Healthy Ireland and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), was established in 2022. The Food Reformulation Task Force will implement the Roadmap and monitor progress made in reducing energy (calories), saturated fat, sugar, and salt in priority food categories.

1.3 Energy and nutrient reformulation targets for priority food categories

When referred to in the context of *A Roadmap for Food Product Reformulation in Ireland*, food reformulation means improving the nutritional content of commonly consumed processed foods and drinks. This is achieved by reducing energy (calories) and target nutrients (saturated fat, sugar, and salt) to improve the nutrient quality of the food supply. Specifically, the Roadmap sets targets for the reduction of energy (calories) and sugar by 20% and salt and saturated fat by 10% between 2015 and 2027, in pre-packaged foods consumed by the general population (see Figure 1).

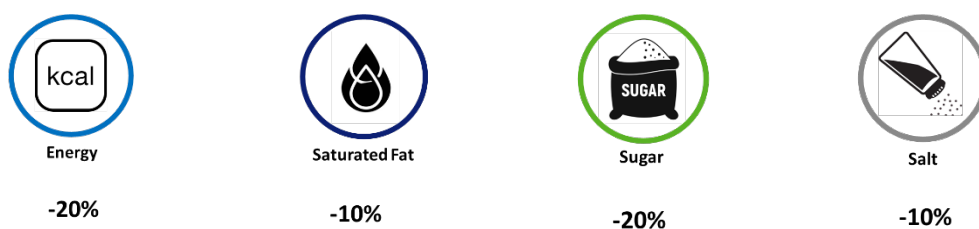


Figure 1: Nutrient reduction targets for food products prioritised for reformulation in Ireland between 2015 and 2027

1.4 Priority food categories for food reformulation in Ireland

The Food Reformulation Task Force published *Priority Food Categories for Food Reformulation in Ireland* in mid-2022. The 40 priority food categories were identified as being in high priority need of reformulation given their significant contribution to dietary intakes of the target nutrients in the Irish population (aged 1–90 years). The report [Food Reformulation Task Force: Priority Food Categories for Food Reformulation in Ireland Version 3](#), is available on the FSAI website (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2022).

1.5 New product development and reformulation

The task force has received feedback from the food industry concerning challenges in applying percentage reduction targets to NPD. In response to this feedback, the task force moved to category-wide thresholds based on the median energy and nutrient values for each priority food category. It published energy and target nutrient thresholds for 13 priority food categories in the report *Food Reformulation Task Force: Target nutrient thresholds for use in new product development* (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2025). The task force has committed to publishing additional thresholds for some of the remaining 25 priority categories.

The task force analysed pre-existing market snapshot data and developed additional energy and target nutrient thresholds for new products in 8 priority food categories or subcategories thereof.

2. Methodology for energy and target nutrient threshold development

2.1 Data collection

Market snapshots were completed by the task force in 2022 and 2023. A market snapshot is a process by which food label and nutrition content information is collected for all food products in a food category available in supermarkets at a point in time. Food label information is collected in line with the Global Food Monitoring Initiative (Dunford *et al.*, 2012). Permission was sought from four of the top five leading supermarkets in Ireland to collect data in store. Field workers collected data in store using the CLAS (Composition and Labelling Information System; a digital data collection tool) mobile phone application, which is licensed from the Institute of Nutrition, Slovenia (Pravst *et al.*, 2021).

Savoury snacks, non-chocolate confectionery, chocolate confectionery, cakes, pastries and buns, and a subcategory of the biscuits including crackers category, sweet biscuits, were included in the market snapshot in 2022. Savouries, cheeses, soups and sauces were included in the market snapshot in 2023.

2.2 New product energy and target nutrient threshold development

To develop energy and target nutrient thresholds for use in NPD, the median energy and target nutrient value was calculated for each of the 8 priority food categories, using the data described in [Section 2.1](#). The median value was chosen as it is considered to be a feasible target, given half of existing food products in the food category have already achieved it. It is also considered sufficiently ambitious as half of existing food products in the category require reformulation to meet the target. Applying the median nutrient content as a category-wide threshold for NPD will contribute to achieving food category reformulation targets described in the Roadmap.

3. Energy and target nutrient thresholds for use in NPD

The energy and target nutrient thresholds for NPD in 8 priority food categories are outlined in Tables 1–6. Food category and subcategory examples are outlined in [Appendix 1](#). Additional information on food categories and their descriptions can be found in the following report *Food Reformulation Task Force: Priority Food Categories for Food Reformulation in Ireland Version3*.

Table 1: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new biscuit products

Biscuits including crackers subcategory	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Sweet biscuits (n=181)	487.6	11.5	33	0.6

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram

Table 2: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new cheese products

Priority food category	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Natural hard cheeses (n=292)	390	20	NT	1.8
Natural soft cheeses (n=117)	285.5	15.6	NT	1.4
Processed cheeses (n=190)	304	14.5	NT	1.6
Processed plant-based alternative to cheeses (n=23)	298	20.9	NT	1.9

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram; NT= not targeted.

Table 3: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new confectionery and snack products

Priority food category	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Cakes, pastries & buns (n=176)	411.2	5.6	33.9	0.5
Chocolate confectionery (n=795)	532.3	17.7	52	NT
Non-chocolate confectionery (n=161)	NT	NT	59	NT

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram; NT= not targeted.

Table 4: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new savoury products

Savouries' subcategories	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Pizza (n=203)	246	3.7	NT	1
Savoury noodle-based products (n=103)	102	1.6	NT	0.6
Savoury pasta-based products (n=110)	148	1.1	NT	0.6
Savoury rice-based products (n=76)	150	0.3	NT	0.4
Savoury couscous-based products (n=11)	139	0.4	NT	0.5
Other savouries (n=65)	260	6.2	NT	0.7

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram; NT= not targeted.

Table 5: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new savoury snack products

Savoury snacks subcategory	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Corn chips (n=16)	496.5	NT	NT	1.1
Potato crisps (n=141)	520.3	NT	NT	1.4
Pretzel-shaped snacks (n=4)	413.4	NT	NT	3.1
Other savoury snacks^(a) (n=136)	474.2	NT	NT	1.8

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram; NT= not targeted.

- (a) Other savoury snacks include extruded snacks, pelleted snacks, popped crisps and popcorn. Examples of extruded snacks include cheese puffs, prawn crackers, onion rings, bacon fries and puffed corn snacks. Examples of pelleted snacks include lentil curls, potato snack sticks and potato snack hoops. Further details of pelleted and extruded snacks are described within the [Monitoring Sodium and Potassium in Processed Foods](#).

Table 6: Energy and target nutrient thresholds per 100 g of new soups and sauces products

Priority food category	Energy (kcal)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (g)
Soups (n=258)	46	0.6	2.1	0.6
Sauces (n=1143)	138	0.9	5.5	1.2

n= sample size; kcal= kilocalories; g= gram.

4. Application of energy and target nutrient thresholds

The energy and target nutrient thresholds outlined in this report should be used for NPD. The task force recognises that some food categories are broad and that it may not be feasible for all food products within a category to achieve the NPD threshold. The food industry is requested to bring foods to the market that are as close to the energy (calories) and target nutrient thresholds as possible, while maintaining the food product characteristics and safety. While reformulating products, it is important to note that foods placed on the Irish market must be safe, as required by Article 14 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. In this context, FBOs should assess any biological or chemical risks associated with reformulated food and review and, where necessary, amend HACCP plans to ensure food safety during production and throughout shelf life.

For food categories not included in this report, food businesses should continue to contact the task force for guidance on appropriate energy (calories) and target nutrient thresholds for use in NPD.

The task force will monitor conformance with these thresholds as part of ongoing monitoring efforts, and progress will be published in monitoring reports.

5. References

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Appendix 1

Table 9: Food categories and examples

Food Categories	Subcategories included in this report	Examples* of foods contained in categories
Biscuits including crackers	Sweet biscuits	Chocolate biscuits, cookies, custard creams
Cakes, pastries & buns		Apple slices, custard slices, brownies
Chocolate confectionery		Milk chocolate, truffles, chocolate bars, chocolate covered confectionery
Cheese	Natural hard cheeses, Natural soft cheeses, Processed cheeses, Processed plant-based alternative to cheeses	Brie, cheese spread, processed single serve cheeses
Non-chocolate confectionery		Lollipops, fruit gums, chewy sweets
Savouries	Savoury couscous-based products, Savoury noodle-based products, Savoury pasta-based products, Pizza, Savoury rice-based products, Other savouries	Deep pan pizza, savoury pancakes (frozen), quiche
Savoury snacks	Corn chips, Potato crisps, Pretzel-shaped snacks. Other savoury snacks	Popcorn, crisps, maize snacks, pretzels, tortilla chips
Soups, sauces and miscellaneous foods	Soups and sauces	Vegetable soup, tomato sauce, mayonnaise

*Examples only, list not exhaustive.



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