

The new whole grain ingredient content claim: Helping people make better food choices

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1. Introduction

Foods labelled as whole grain vary considerably in whole grain content from 1.4g to 75g per serve.¹ So one serve of whole grain food may contribute very little to the 48g whole grain Daily Target Intake (DTI). Clear, consistent communication of the whole grain content of foods is needed to assist people in choosing whole grain foods that will help them achieve the DTI with the six grain serves recommended by the Australian Dietary Guidelines.² The Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™ (GLNC) has developed an evidence-based industry standard to guide communication of the whole grain content of foods.

The 48g whole grain Daily Target Intake was established in 2006 based on the scientific evidence of the whole grain intakes associated with reduced risk of coronary heart disease.³

2. Methods

A set of three minimum whole grain content claims was developed based on the amounts needed to achieve the whole grain DTI within the 2013 Dietary Guidelines recommendations. The levels were then cross referenced by Sayne Dalton, from the University of Wollongong, using a database of the whole grain content of foods on shelf.⁴

Qualitative research was conducted to determine the wording and related text that would most effectively indicate an increasing amount of whole grain in the food. Four sets of descriptors were tested: good source of whole grain, high in whole grain, rich in whole grain or one serve of whole grain. Participants were also asked what, if any, additional information would help clarify how these foods helped them meet the DTI. A five-point scale nationally representative sample survey was conducted to determine the intent to purchase and consume breakfast cereal carrying the three levels of a whole grain content claim: contains, high in, very high in whole grain.

Finally, nine academic and public health experts took part in a one-day Round Table discussion to obtain guidance on the validity and applicability of the levels.

3. Results

Three minimum levels of whole grain content were proposed: 8g, 16g and 24g whole grain per serve. These levels represent one sixth, one third and one half of the 48g DTI respectively.

The lowest level of 8g per serve represents the minimum amount of whole grain that could be used to achieve the DTI from the six serves of grains per day recommended by the Dietary Guidelines. This also aligns with guidelines used internationally with the Whole Grain Stamp program.⁵

The two higher levels of 16g and 24g per serve were proposed to allow people to meet the DTI by choosing some foods higher in whole grain and some non-whole grain foods such as high fibre cereal or white rice, aligning with the Dietary Guidelines recommendation of 'mostly whole grain and/or high fibre' (Figure 1).

Cross reference with the database of whole grain foods on shelf in 2011 indicated that 22% met the 8g minimum, 22% met the 16g minimum and 43% met the 24g minimum whole grain content level.

The most effective set of claims to convey that foods contain different amounts of whole grain were the claims 'contains whole grain', 'high in whole grain' and 'very high in whole grain'. The research indicates the claims need to be accompanied by a contextual statement to explain how this food contributes to the DTI.

There was no significant difference in the intent to purchase (83, 81, 85% top two box; CI 95%) or consume foods (88, 87, 87% top two box; CI 95%) with the three different claims. Presented as a comparative set there was a non-significant tendency for 'high in whole grain' to be more compelling.

The experts agreed that the 8g, 16g, 24g content levels and claim wording of contains/high/very high were appropriate. The expert panel suggested that GLNC consider the additional requirements including an energy limit per serve or per 100g and/or a criteria of a minimum percent whole grain content.



4. Discussion

This study indicates that people do not have a clear understanding that foods vary in whole grain content and that different levels of content claim do not affect relative intent to purchase or consume whole grain foods. To assist people achieve the DTI, consistent messaging across the grain food category is needed. However, these claims need to be accompanied by supporting information about how to interpret this information such as information on pack and education initiatives.

An appropriate message is a set of three whole grain content claims (Table 1). The product audit indicates these levels represent achievable whole grain content targets for the food industry.

5. Conclusion

In 2013, GLNC will launch a Code of Practice to guide clear, consistent messages about whole grain content of foods to assist people to choose and eat whole grain foods to meet the 48g whole grain DTI while also meeting Dietary Guideline recommendations (Table 1). This research indicates that the public health benefit can only be fully realised if people understand how the claim relates to the 48g DTI within the context of the Dietary Guidelines recommendations for whole grain intake (Figure 1). Dietitians and other health care professionals play a key role in helping people make this link.

In line with the recommendations from the Round Table, GLNC is developing additional messaging to help Australians identify healthier grain and legume foods. These foods will need to meet category-specific criteria such as energy, sodium and saturated fat.

FIGURE 1

Meet your Whole Grain Daily Target Intake with...

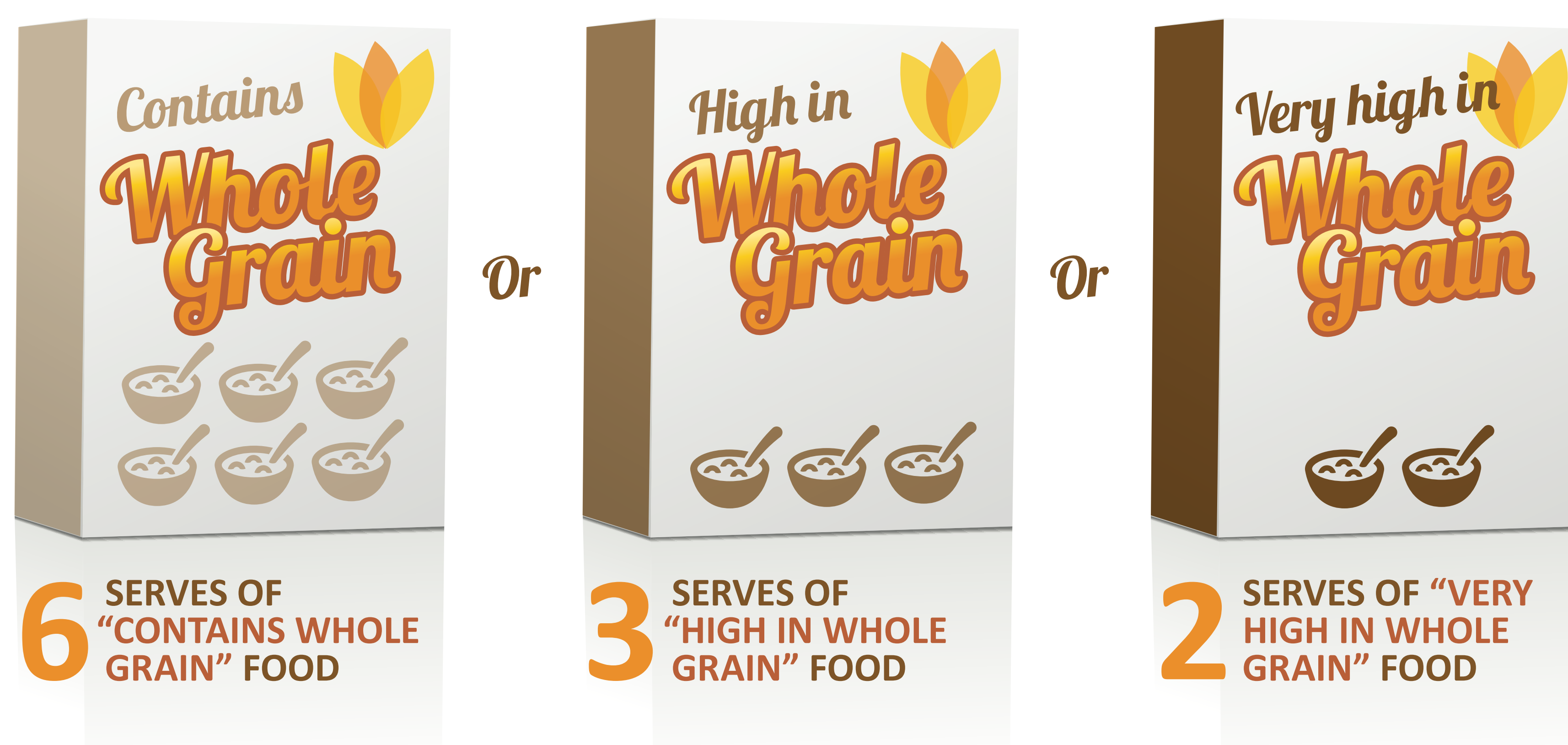


TABLE 1

WHOLE GRAIN CONTENT CLAIM	CONTAINS WHOLE GRAIN	HIGH IN WHOLE GRAIN	VERY HIGH IN WHOLE GRAIN
GRAMS OF WHOLE GRAIN	≥8g / serve on pack	≥16g / serve on pack	≥24g / serve on pack

REFERENCES

1. GLNC. Whole grain food product audit 2012. Unpublished.
2. *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013.
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4. Dalton, M.S.C., Probst, Y., Batterham, M., & Tapsell, L. (2013). Wholegrain Product Database. Data unpublished.
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