



Unilever

## Unilever's Nutrition Standards

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## Introduction

Unilever's Nutrition Standards are two internally developed sets of standards for portfolio improvement: Unilever's Science-based Nutrition Criteria (USNC) for reducing nutrients to limit, and the Positive Nutrition Standards (PNS), which address recommended ingredients and nutrients in line with dietary recommendations for a healthy sustainable diet. The standards are regularly updated to stay aligned with scientific developments and to drive product reformulation.

In 2003, Unilever was the first company to implement a self-developed nutrient profiling system under the Nutrition Enhancement Programme (NEP). Aligned with WHO's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, we aimed to evaluate and improve the nutritional quality of our portfolio. This involved developing product standards that focussed on energy, sodium, sugars, saturated fat and trans fat ([Nijman et al. EJCN 2007](#)). To develop the standards, we translated WHO global guidelines for daily intake into product group-specific nutrient standards, considering the role of the product in the diet, including appropriate serving size and frequency of consumption. Since 2010, the Highest Nutrition Standards (HNS), evolved from the NEP, guided the company's (re)formulation agenda and related commitments.

In 2020, Unilever undertook a comprehensive review of its standards. Recognising the high prevalence of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (2, 3, 17) and the potential impact of a shift towards more sustainable plant-forward diets, we broadened the scope beyond updating our standards on nutrients to limit. We also introduced a new set of standards to increase amounts of ingredients and nutrients with a positive health impact detailed in Table 2.

This resulted in two sets of standards: Unilever's Science-based Nutrition Criteria (USNC) and Positive Nutrition Standards (PNS). Both USNC and PNS are based on guidelines of international health authorities, which are translated into product group standards. The USNC and PNS are two independent sets of standards, meaning that compliance to nutrients to limit and positives are assessed separately to avoid compensation.

Scientific modelling, using national food consumption data of United Kingdom, France, United States, Brazil and China, has shown that reformulation of food products towards USNC would reduce average population intakes of these nutrients by up to 21% for energy, 24% for sodium, 30% for saturated fat, 32% for added sugars and 22% for total sugars. Moreover, reformulation would bring intakes of these nutrients closer to the referenced WHO guidelines. We have published these findings in the peer-reviewed journal *Nutrients* ([Dotsch-Klerk et al. Nutrients 2022](#)). We also modelled the impact of PNS using data from the United States and showed that applying PNS could increase mean population intakes by 30% for fibre, more than 50% for vegetables and even double the intake of whole grains. The findings were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers in Nutrition* ([Dotsch-Klerk et al. Front. Nutr 2023](#)).

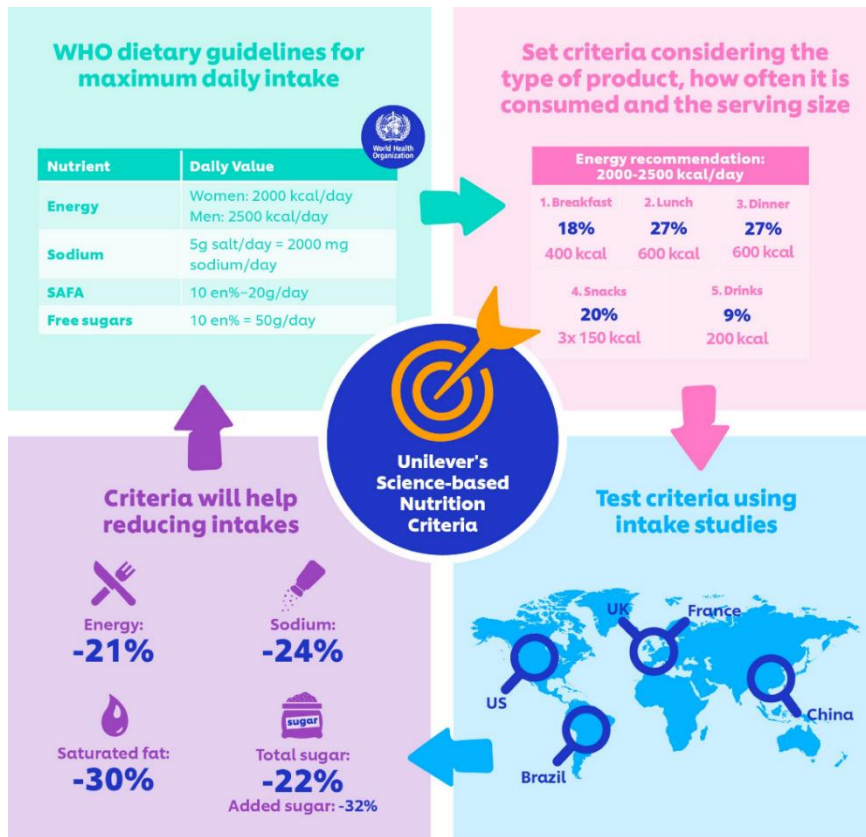


Figure 1. Development & evaluation of USNC



Figure 2. Development & evaluation of PNS

## Unilever Nutrient Profiling principles

To ensure our reformulation standards are an effective and credible instrument to help create better diets, a set of global principles for nutrient profiling were taken into account when setting the standards:

- Encourage innovation and reformulation of our Nutrition and Ice cream products
- Be scientifically sound and reflect internationally accepted dietary guidelines
- Address nutrients and/or ingredients internationally recognised as relevant for improving public health
- Be all inclusive, with product group specific standards for all product groups
- Be stretching and realistic, considering the role of the product in the diet and maintaining taste and enjoyment for our consumers

## Reference values used in standards setting

Unilever's Nutrition Standards are firmly grounded in science and international dietary guidelines. We translated the recommendations from WHO and CODEX references into specific standards for each product group.

**Table 1. Reference values used for USNC**

Nutrient	Reference value	Reference
<b>Energy</b>	Women: 2000 kcal/day Men: 2500 kcal/day	<a href="#">FAO/WHO. Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation. Human Energy Requirements; FAO: Rome, Italy, 2001.</a>
<b>Saturated fat (SAFA)</b>	10 en% ~ 20g/day*	<a href="#">WHO Guideline. Saturated fatty acid and trans-fatty acid intake for adults and children. WHO: Geneva, Switzerland, 2023.</a>
<b>Sodium</b>	5 salt/day = 2000 mg sodium/day	<a href="#">WHO Guideline: Sodium intake for adults and children. WHO: Geneva, Switzerland, 2012.</a>
<b>Free sugars</b>	10 en% = 50g/day*	<a href="#">WHO. Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. WHO: Geneva, Switzerland, 2015.</a>
<b>Trans fat (TFA)</b>	1 en% ~ 2 g/day iTFA ≤ 2g/100g fat	<a href="#">WHO Guideline. Saturated fatty acid and trans-fatty acid intake for adults and children. WHO: Geneva, Switzerland, 2023.</a>

\*assuming a 2000 kcal diet, in line with GDA/DV labelling on-pack

**Table 2. Reference values used for PNS**

Ingredient/Nutrient	Reference value	Reference*
<b>Fruit &amp; Vegetables</b>	400g (i.e. five portions of 80g) of fruit and vegetables per day	<a href="#">Healthy diet (who.int)</a>
<b>Wholegrain</b>	8g per serve	<a href="#">The Whole Grains Council</a>
<b>Dairy (only for kids products)</b>	25g per 100g	<a href="#">Cow's Milk and Milk Alternatives CDC</a>
<b>Protein</b>	10% or 20% of NRV per 100g	<a href="#">Codex Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)</a>
<b>Fibre</b>	3g per 100g	<a href="#">Codex Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)</a>
<b>Omega 3</b>	0.3 g alpha-linolenic acid per 100g and per 100 kcal	<a href="#">Regulation (EU) No 1047/2012.</a>
<b>Micronutrients</b> Vitamins: A, C, B2, Folate, B12, D, E Minerals: Calcium, Iodine, Iron, Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc	15% of NRV per 100g/100ml (solids/liquid foods) 7.5g of NRV per 100ml (beverages)	<a href="#">Codex Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)</a>

\*References for global portfolio. Products sold in China<sup>1</sup>, Europe<sup>2</sup> and USA<sup>3</sup> are scored according to local regulation

## Product groups

For USNC and PNS, we translated international dietary recommendations into product category-specific standards for all product groups in our portfolio. We grouped products considering the following:

- Product composition
- Role of each product in the diet and consumption occasion, including frequency of consumption
- Product serving size, bearing in mind balanced portions

<sup>1</sup> [标签标准 \(nfi.or.th\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Nutrition claims \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Food Labelling Guide \(fda.gov\)](#)

**Table 3. Unilever's product groups**

PRODUCT GROUP	DESCRIPTION
<b>MEALS</b>	
<b>Main Meals</b>	Products which are or are used to prepare a main meal. A main meal consists of at least 2/3 of the following components: carbohydrate, protein, vegetable/fruit
<b>Small Meals</b>	Products consumed as an in between meal and on occasion used to replace a main meal or in diets consisting of several small meals a day
<b>MEAL COMPONENT</b>	
<b>Cereals</b>	Cereals usually prepared with water, milk, yoghurt or dairy alternatives
<b>Bread Products</b>	All types of breads or substitutes of bread
<b>Spreads - Sweet &amp; Savoury</b>	Products spread onto foods such as bread and crackers
<b>Carbohydrate-based Dishes</b>	Products eaten as part of a main meal with at least 70% carbohydrates
<b>Animal Protein</b>	Products intended as the protein component of a meal containing animal protein (e.g. meat, fish, insects)
<b>Plant Protein</b>	Products intended as the protein component of a meal containing plant-based protein
<b>Soups</b>	Soups eaten on all occasions
<b>Pickled &amp; Fermented Vegetables</b>	Fruits & vegetables preserved in a salt brine or vinegar or through fermentation
<b>Meal Sauces</b>	Sauces with a serving size >35g
<b>TASTEMAKERS &amp; COOKING AIDS</b>	
<b>Water-based Sauces</b>	Sauces used in small quantities as an accompaniment to a meal (serving<35g) without an emulsifying agent and with a fat content <10% w/w
<b>Emulsion-based Sauces &amp; Cooking Fats</b>	Sauces with an emulsifying agent, used in small quantities as an accompaniment to a meal (serving<35g), and oils & other fat-based products used during preparation or at the table
<b>Mustards</b>	Products made from mustard seeds or with >40% mustard
<b>Liquid Bouillons &amp; seasonings</b>	Bouillons and seasonings <u>with multipurpose application</u> that are sold in liquid, jelly or paste format
<b>Universal Bouillons &amp; Seasonings</b>	<u>Multipurpose</u> bouillons cubes/powders and seasonings sprinkled in small amounts
<b>Dish Specific Bouillons &amp; Seasonings</b>	Bouillons & seasonings (any format) <u>with a single dish application</u> by design or validated by consumer data. Preparation instructions on-pack
<b>Toppings - Sweet &amp; Savoury</b>	A garnish placed on top of a food or dish for flavour or decoration
<b>Cooking &amp; Baking Agents</b>	Binders, cooking & baking ingredients
<b>TREATS &amp; SNACKS</b>	
<b>Ice Cream &amp; Desserts</b>	Ice cream, water/fruit ices, sorbet, and frozen or ambient desserts
<b>Snacks - Sweet &amp; Savoury</b>	Smaller sized sweet or savoury products consumed as a treat or snack in between meals
<b>Kids Ice Cream &amp; Desserts</b>	Ice cream, water/fruit ices, sorbet, frozen or ambient desserts, designed for consumption by children (6-12 years old)
<b>Kids Snacks - Sweet &amp; Savoury</b>	Smaller sized sweet or savoury products consumed as a treat or snack in between meals, designed for consumption by children (6-12 years old)
<b>BEVERAGES</b>	
<b>RTD &amp; Concentrated Beverages</b>	Ice tea, milk tea, coffee premixes, squash, slush and flavoured water, sold as RTD or concentrated format
<b>Leaf Tea, Herbal Infusions &amp; Coffee</b>	Dry leaf, herbal infusions and coffee powder
<b>Fruit &amp; Vegetable Juices</b>	Beverages that are intended to be consumed as a juice-based beverage and primarily consist of fruit or vegetable derivatives/components (e.g. juice, puree, pulp)
<b>Cereal &amp; Malt-based Beverages</b>	All cereal- or malt-based products to be used as beverages
<b>OTHERS</b>	
<b>All other products</b>	Products that don't fit under any of the other product groups

## Application and use of the standards

Unilever's Nutrition Standards (USNC and PNS) apply to our entire portfolio, across all products, regions and brands. These standards guide our continuous portfolio improvement through innovation and reformulation. They also play a key role in evaluating Nutrition & Health Claims, product fortification and aligning with our Principles on Responsible Food & Beverage Marketing. Additionally, they are incorporated in our Healthy Recipe Framework used in recipes on-pack and online, as well as of our branded healthy eating programmes and campaigns.

**Table 4. Unilever's Science-based Nutrition Criteria (USNC)**

Product role	Product group	Energy	Sodium	SAFA	Added Sugar	TFA
Meals	Main Meals	600 kcal/serving	250 mg/100g	1.5 g/100g	1.25 g/100g	PHVO: 1 g/100g product  iTFA: 2 g /100g total fat
	Small Meals	400 kcal/serving	250 mg/100g	1.5 g/100g	1.25 g/100g	
Meal components	Cereals	NA	375 mg/100g	2 g/100g	20g/100g	
	Bread Products	NA	375 mg/100g	1 g/100g	4g/100g	
	Spreads - Sweet & Savoury	NA	720 mg/100g	10g/100g	17g/100g	
	Carbohydrate-based Dishes	300 kcal/serving	250 mg/100g	1.5 g/100g	1 g/100g	
	Animal Protein	300 kcal/serving	675 mg/100g	5 g/100g	1 g/100g	
	Plant Protein	300 kcal/serving	450 mg/100g	3 g/100g	2.5 g/100g	
	Soups	NA	265 mg/100g	1.5 g/100g	1 g/100g	
	Meal Sauces	NA	340 mg/100g	2 g/100g	2.5 g/100g	
Tastemaker & cooking aids	Pickled & Fermented Vegetables	NA	1000 mg/100g	NA	8 g/100g	
	Water-based Sauces	NA	750 mg/100g	NA	17 g/100g	
	Emulsion-based Sauces & Cooking Fats	NA	750 mg/100g	18% total fat	7 g/100g	
	Mustards	NA	2000 mg/100g	18% total fat	7 g/100g	
	Dish Specific Bouillons & Seasonings	NA	265 mg/100g	1.5 g/100g	1 g/100g	
	Liquid & Paste Bouillons & Seasonings	NA	4000 mg/100g	NA	40 g/100g	
	Universal Bouillons & Seasonings	NA	24,000 mg/100g	NA	20 g/100g	
	Toppings - Sweet & Savoury	NA	1250 mg/100g	12.5 g/100g	17 g/100g	
Cooking & Baking Agents	NA	1250 mg/100g	12.5 g/100g	31 g/100g		

Product role	Product group	Energy	Sodium	SAFA	Total Sugar	TFA
Treats & snacks	Ice-cream & Desserts	150 kcal/serving	NA	5 g/serving	12 g/serving	PHVO: 1 g/100g product  iTFA: 2 g /100g total fat
	Snacks - Sweet & Savoury	150 kcal/serving	300 mg/serving	3 g/serving	12 g/serving	
	Kids Ice-cream & Desserts	110 kcal/serving	NA	3 g/serving	12 g/serving	
	Kids Snacks - Sweet & Savoury	110 kcal/serving	300 mg/serving	3 g/serving	12 g/serving	
Beverages	RTD & Concentrated Beverages	NA	NA	1 g/100g or ml	5 g/100g or ml	
	Leaf Teas & Herbal Infusions	NA	NA	NA	No added sugar allowed	
	Fruit Juices	NA	NA	NA	No added sugar allowed	
	Cereal & Malt-based Beverages	NA	NA	1g/100g	6 g/100g	

Product role	Product group	Energy	Sodium	SAFA	Added Sugar	TFA
NA	All Other Products	NA	100 mg/100g	1 g/100g	2.5 g/100g	PHVO: 1 g/100g product  iTFA: 2 g /100g total fat

Unilever's Science-based Nutrition Criteria apply to the entire Unilever portfolio from 2023. Products should be scored 'as consumed', meaning as sold or as prepared depending on format.

## Table 5. Positive Nutrition Standards

Product Group	Micronutrients*	Vegetables & Fruit	Protein	Fibre	Wholegrain	Dairy	Omega 3
<b>Plant Protein</b>	Solids or liquid foods: 15% RDA/serve  Beverages: ≥7.5% RDA per 100g or ml	80g/serve	10g /100 g	3g/100g or 1.5g/100kcal	NA	NA	NA
<b>Soups</b>			30g/serve		8g/serve		
<b>Main Meals</b>		NA					
<b>Small Meals</b>		NA					
<b>Cereals</b>		8g/serve					
<b>Bread products</b>		NA					
<b>Carbohydrate-based Dishes</b>		NA					
<b>Meal sauces</b>		8g/serve					
<b>Fruit &amp; vegetable Juices</b>		25%					
<b>Mustards</b>		NA					
<b>All other products</b>		NA					
<b>Ice cream &amp; desserts</b>		25%					
<b>Snacks - Sweet &amp; savoury</b>		0,3 g ALA/100g					
<b>Kids Ice cream &amp; desserts</b>		NA					
<b>Kids snacks - sweet &amp; savoury</b>		NA					
<b>Emulsion based sauces &amp; cooking fats</b>		NA					
<b>Spreads - Sweet &amp; savoury</b>		NA					
<b>Water based sauces</b>		NA					
<b>RTD &amp; Concentrated Beverages</b>		NA					
<b>Cereal &amp; Malt-based beverages</b>		NA					
<b>Pickled &amp; fermented vegetables</b>		NA					
<b>Liquid Bouillons &amp; Seasonings</b>		NA					
<b>Universal Bouillons &amp; Seasonings</b>		NA					
<b>Dish Specific Bouillons &amp; Seasonings</b>	NA						
<b>Toppings - Sweet &amp; savoury</b>	NA						
<b>Cooking &amp; baking agents</b>	NA						
<b>Leaf Teas, Herbal Infusions &amp; Coffee</b>	NA						
<b>Animal Protein</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Positive Protein Standards apply to the entire Unilever portfolio from 2021.

No standards are in scope for Animal Protein product group in alignment with Unilever strategy to encourage more sustainable healthy plant-based diets.

Regardless of products format, all products are scored as sold (including rehydration factors) to only count the ingredients and nutrients contained in our products and do not count the ingredients and nutrients added by consumers and chefs.