

# Is it possible to harmonise European dietary guidelines?

*CRonEM Annual Conference*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013*

**Kerry Ann Brown**  
*kerry.brown@surrey.ac.uk*



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EUROpean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned

# Summary

- What are dietary guidelines?
- Why are dietary guidelines important for policy?
- What do European stakeholders think about dietary guidelines? A EURRECA interview study
- Challenges for dietary guideline harmonisation across Europe



# What are dietary guidelines?

- Definition debated but broad agreement that dietary guidelines...
  - Are statements that promote nutritional well-being for the general public
  - Use nutrient and food-based terminology
  - Consider habitual dietary eating patterns + dietary reference values

*“Adults – no more than 6g salt/2.4g Na/d”*

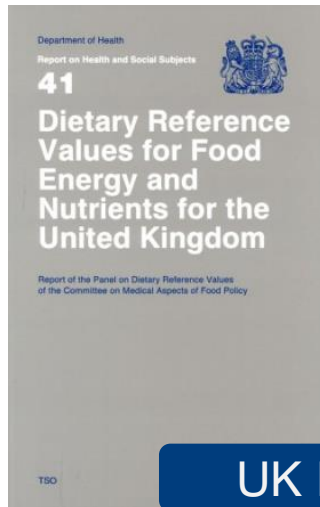


**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EURopean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned

# What are dietary guidelines?



UK DRV

*Adults*  
 *$\leq 6g$  salt/ $2.4g$  Na/d*



NL food guide



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EUROpean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned

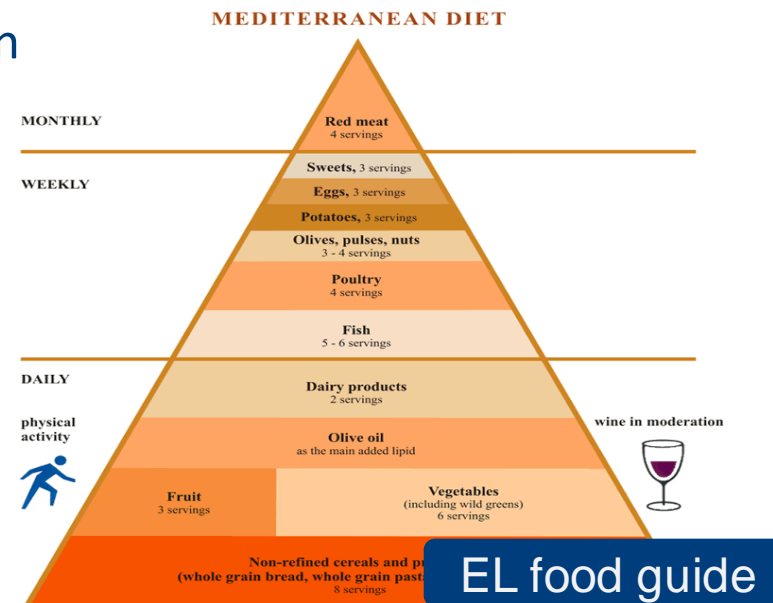
# Why are dietary guidelines important for policy?

- Policy development, implementation and evaluation:
  - Benchmarks for monitoring, surveillance & compliance e.g. NDNS, food intake, food composition, catering...
  - Interventions & consumer communication e.g. food-based dietary guidelines & visual food guides (school education, food labelling...)

*“Total Fat  $\leq$  35% of food energy”*



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



# What do European stakeholders think about dietary guidelines?

- EURRECA study background:
  - European Commission encouraged multi-stakeholder involvement to establish consistent health promotion
  - European Food Safety Authority consultation on European food-based dietary guidelines

## *The Danish 8 diet tips*

- Eat fruit & veg. 6 pieces a day
- Eat fish & fish products several times a week
- Eat potatoes, rice, pasta & wholemeal bread every day
- Limit the intake of sugar, particularly from soft drinks, confectionery & cakes
- Eat less fat, particularly fats from meat and dairy products
- Eat a varied diet & maintain a normal weight- Drink water when you are thirsty
- Engage in physical activity at least 30 minutes a day

DK FBDG



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EUROpean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned

# Aim/method

- Aim: Explored European stakeholder beliefs about dietary guidelines
- Method:
  - 77 qualitative semi-structured interviews
  - Countries = CR, DACH, ES, NO/NNR, SR & UK
  - Stakeholders = government, scientific advisory body, professional/academic, industry, NGO



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EUROPEAN MICRONUTRIENT RECOMMENDATIONS ALIGNED

# Results - terminology

- Terminology variety
  - Food-based dietary guidelines (Danish tips)
  - Food guides (Greek pyramid/ UK plate)
  - Nutrient/dietary recommendations (6g/d NaCl)
  - Dietary reference values (UK RNI)
  - Guideline daily amounts/traffic lights (industry)
  - Translation - Serbian “preporuke” recommendation vs. Croatian “smernice” guidelines

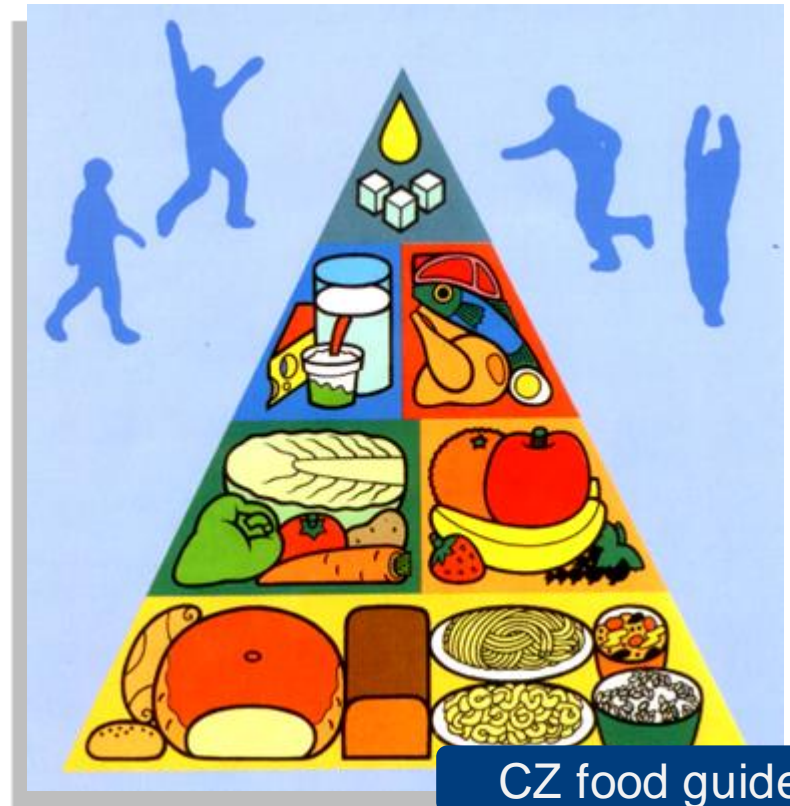
*“Sugars (added)  
≤11% of food  
energy”*





# Results - content

- Content variety
  - Nutrient based (saturated fat)
  - Food-based (fruit & vegetables)
  - Nutrient & food-based
  - General e.g. energy balance and/or + non-diet (physical activity, sustainability... )



# Results - purpose



- Purpose variety
  - Health promotion advice e.g. general public food-based dietary guidelines & food labelling, school children education or for education for special groups (athletes/ diabetics)
  - Government/health professional monitoring tool
  - Food industry compliance tool

*“Fruit & Vegetables  $\geq$  5 portions (400g) of a variety of fruit and vegetables per day”*



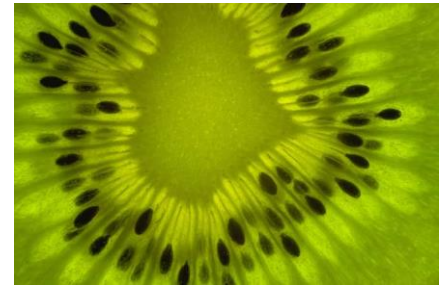
**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EURopean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned

# Challenges for dietary guideline harmonisation across Europe

- Terminology clarification possible? Ambiguity due to variety of audiences & uses
- Content harmonisation possible/useful? Country differences e.g. cultural food practices, food availability, diet-related health problems, scientific approach, government priority in public health agenda
- Share best-practice & align process rather than content (EFSA FBDG document)?
- Common aim possible? Clarify purpose & measure effectiveness of dietary guidelines?



# Acknowledgements



**Thanks to all FCBH & EURRECA colleagues!**

Dhonukshe-Rutten R, Bouwman J, Brown KA et al.(2013) EURRECA – Evidence-based methodology for deriving micronutrient recommendations. Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition (Jul 2013 publication)

Brown KA et al. (2011) Micronutrient recommendation stakeholders' beliefs on dietary guidelines: a qualitative study across six European countries/regions. EJCN, 65 (7): 872-874

Brown KA et al. (2011) A review of consumer awareness, understanding & use of FBDGs. BJN, 106 (1): 15-26

*EUropean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned network of excellence funded by the European Commission FP6, grant no. 036196-2. <http://www.eurreca.org/everyone>*

**Thank you for your attention!**



**FOOD, CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR & HEALTH**  
RESEARCH CENTRE



EUropean micronutrient RECommendations Aligned