

SECTION 3

JACK: I've still got loads to do for our report on nutritional food labels.
 ALICE: Me too. What did you learn from doing the project about your own shopping habits?
 JACK: Well, I've always had to check labels for traces of peanuts in everything I eat because

of my allergy. But beyond that I've never really been concerned enough to check how healthy a product is. Q21

ALICE: This project has actually taught me to read the labels much more carefully. I tended to believe claims on packaging like 'low in fat'. But I now realise that the 'healthy' yoghurt I've bought for years is full of sugar and that it's actually quite high in calories. Q22

JACK: Ready meals are the worst ... comparing the labels on supermarket pizzas was a real eye-opener. Did you have any idea how many calories they contain? I was amazed.

ALICE: Yes, because unless you read the label really carefully you wouldn't know that the nutritional values given are for half a pizza. Q23

JACK: When most people eat the whole pizza. Not exactly transparent is it?

ALICE: Not at all. But I expect it won't stop you from buying pizza?

JACK: Probably not, no! I thought comparing the different labelling systems used by food manufacturers was interesting. I think the kind of labelling system used makes a big difference.

ALICE: Which one did you prefer?

JACK: I liked the traditional daily value system best – the one which tells you what proportion of your required daily intake of each ingredient the product contains. I'm not sure it's the easiest for people to use but at least you get the full story. I like to know all the ingredients in a product – not just how much fat, salt and sugar they contain. Q24

ALICE: But it's good supermarkets have been making an effort to provide reliable information for customers.

JACK: Yes. There just needs to be more consistency between labelling systems used by different supermarkets, in terms of portion sizes, etc.

ALICE: Mmm. The labels on the different brands of chicken flavour crisps were quite revealing too, weren't they?

JACK: Yeah. I don't understand how they can get away with calling them chicken flavour when they only contain artificial additives. Q25

Audioscripts

- ALICE I know I'd at least have expected them to contain a small percentage of real chicken.
JACK Absolutely.
ALICE I think having nutritional food labeling has been a good idea, don't you? I think it will change people's behaviour and stop mothers, in particular, buying the wrong things.
JACK. But didn't that study kind of prove the opposite? People didn't necessarily stop buying unhealthy products.
ALICE They only said that might be the case. Those findings weren't that conclusive and it was quite a small-scale study. I think more research has to be done. Q26
JACK Yes, I think you're probably right.
- JACK. What do you think of the traffic-light system?
ALICE I think supermarkets like the idea of having a colour-coded system – red, orange or green – for levels of fat, sugar and salt in a product.
JACK: But it's not been adopted universally. And not on all products. Why do you suppose that is? Q27 & Q28
ALICE: Pressure from the food manufacturers. Hardly surprising that some of them are opposed to flagging up how unhealthy their products are.
JACK: I'd have thought it would have been compulsory. It seems ridiculous it isn't.
ALICE I know And what I couldn't get over is the fact that it was brought in without enough consultation – a lot of experts had deep reservations about it.
JACK That is a bit weird I suppose there's an argument for doing the research now when consumers are familiar with this system.
ALICE: Yeah, maybe
JACK: The participants in the survey were quite positive about the traffic-light system.
ALICE Mmm. But I don't think they targeted the right people. They should have focused on people with low literacy levels because these labels are designed to be accessible to them.
JACK Yeah. But it's good to get feedback from all socio-economic groups And there wasn't much variation in their responses Q29 & Q30
ALICE No. But if they hadn't interviewed participants face-to-face they could have used a much bigger sample size I wonder why they chose that method?
JACK: Dunno. How were they selected? Did they volunteer or were they approached?
ALICE I think they volunteered. The thing that wasn't stated was how often they bought packaged food – all we know is how frequently they used the supermarket.