



## CEEREAL Statement on Sugars

January 2022

CEEREAL members want to make sure that people in Europe have better access to a broader range of breakfast cereal options that are safe, nutritious, accessible, sustainable, convenient, and enjoyable. Breakfast cereal consumption is associated with diets higher in vitamins, minerals, and fibre as well as whole grain, and lower in fat<sup>1</sup>.

### The important role of sugars

Sugars fulfil various functions in food impacting typical product characteristics in products preferred by consumers, including in breakfast cereals. Sugars not only give taste and aroma to foods, they also add structure and texture, are key to fermentation, and give colour, for example, through caramelisation. Sugars also have a food-safety function as a preservative that helps to retain moisture and bulking<sup>2</sup> and therefore improves conservation.

Breakfast cereals can contain both naturally occurring sugars from grains or fruit and some added sugars. On the pack of a product consumers will find the total amount of sugars in the nutrition table. In the EU this is required by the Food Information to Consumers Regulation<sup>3</sup>. It sets the reference intake for sugars at 90g per day. On the front-of-pack consumers can often find the Reference Intake (RI), which expresses the contribution a portion of breakfast cereals will make towards the daily sugar intake of a healthy adult.

Breakfast cereals come in great variety giving people a wide range of options and different levels of sugars or no sugars. In fact, 75% of all cereal products contain less than 7.5g sugar per serving (30g)<sup>4</sup>.

### The contribution of breakfast cereals to daily sugar intake in Europe is at low levels

According to a study from the French research agency ANSES<sup>5</sup>, breakfast cereals contribute 2.3% to the daily sugar intake of children under 10 years, and 4% to that of adolescents (11 to 17 years), and 1.3% to that of adults (18 and above).

A study by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre<sup>6</sup> – in alignment with the previously mentioned analysis – found that breakfast cereals are minor contributors to the daily sugar intake and

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, P. (2014). *The benefits of breakfast cereal consumption: a systematic review of the evidence base*. *Advances in Nutrition*, 5 (5), 636S-673S, Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3945/an.114.006247>

<sup>2</sup> EUFIC (2020). *Daily sugar intake: How many grams of sugar per day?* Food facts for healthy choices. <https://www.eufic.org/en/whats-in-food/article/daily-sugar-intake-how-many-grams-of-sugar-per-day>

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169&from=EN>

<sup>4</sup> On a sales-weighted basis for recipes constituting 85% of volume sales in the EU and UK for CEEREAL members in 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Avis de l'Anses (2017). *Étude individuelle nationale des consommations alimentaires 3*. INCA3 study data 2014/2015, pages 533, 537, 546. <https://www.anses.fr/fr/system/files/NUT2014SA0234Ra.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Moz-Christofolletti, M., Wollgast, J. (2021). *Sugars, salt, saturated fat and fibre purchased through packaged food and soft drinks in Europe 2015-2018: Are we making progress?* Joint Research Center European Commission. <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/13/7/2416/htm>. The study suggests decreases in both market-weighted and arithmetic mean sugar content for breakfast cereals of -4.4% (-0.7 g/100 g) and -2.5% (-0.4 g/100 g), respectively.

are one of the few categories that have shown improvements in their nutritional content by reducing sugar by 4.4% from 2015-2018.

In EFSA's draft opinion on dietary sugars<sup>7</sup>, breakfast cereals are not mentioned among the food groups that contribute the most to the intake of added and free sugars. Nevertheless, breakfast cereal manufacturers continue reformulating and reducing sugars in their products while ensuring that those who consume breakfast cereals in the morning can enjoy them without compromising on taste.

### **CEEREAL members have reduced sugar by 10.2% between 2015 and 2020 and commit to further efforts**

Between 2015 and 2020, CEEREAL members have reduced sugars in breakfast cereals by 10.2% on a sales-weighted basis<sup>8</sup>. In their From Seed to Spoon manifesto<sup>9</sup>, CEEREAL members commit to further improving the nutritional value of breakfast cereals, including by working on reformulation and innovation to offer healthier and tasty options for people. They will also make it easier for people to identify these products and understand their benefits.

Also, under the EU's new Farm to Fork Code of Conduct<sup>10</sup>, companies, including various CEEREAL members, have committed on an individual level<sup>11</sup> to further work on reformulation.

National associations, on behalf of breakfast cereal manufacturers, have committed to further reducing sugars across the category. Most of these targets have either already been met or, where targets are in the future, they are making significant progress towards achieving them. Also, as part of the wide range of cereals on offer, manufacturers have developed products that are either low in sugars or have no added sugars, for example oats.

### **The right policy framework is crucial to speed up these efforts**

It is important to take a holistic approach towards achieving the overall common goal to provide people with safe, nutritious, and sustainable food products. An enabling framework is crucial to help facilitate ongoing efforts. Such a framework, would, for example, review and extend the currently restrictive permitted uses of sweeteners to allow a broader use across the category. In addition, it would include a review of the sugar reduction claims framework to make it possible for companies to communicate small but nonetheless significant changes. Right now, companies can only make claim on sugar reduction if the reduction made was 30% or above versus the market average. If lower, they would not be allowed to do so even though significant progress had been achieved.

In Switzerland, the government allows sugar reduction claims even if the threshold of 30% is not reached provided that the reduction is not compensated by ingredients that add a sweet taste, the

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<sup>7</sup> European Food Safety Authority (2021). *Safety of dietary sugars: draft opinion open for public consultation*. <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/safety-dietary-sugars-draft-opinion-open-public-consultation>

<sup>8</sup> On a sales-weighted basis for recipes constituting 85% of volume sales in the EU and UK for CEEREAL members in 2015 and 2020. The difference between CEEREAL and JRC data can be explained by the different time period of data sampling, product categories and classification of Euromonitor data. Also, JRC data is weighted for market share data, whereas CEEREAL data is an estimate on sales volumes (sell in, not sell out).

<sup>9</sup> From Seed to Spoon (2021). *The contribution of breakfast cereals to achieving balanced diets and sustainability food systems*. <https://www.from-seed-to-spoon.info/>

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2021). *EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices*. [https://ec.europa.eu/food/system/files/2021-06/f2f\\_sfpd\\_coc\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/system/files/2021-06/f2f_sfpd_coc_final_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2021). *Pledges to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices*. Food Safety. [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy/sustainable-food-processing/code-conduct/individual-pledges\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy/sustainable-food-processing/code-conduct/individual-pledges_en)

reduction of added sugar is at least 5%, and overall sugar is reduced. A claim to highlight the change in sensory characteristics can be used for one year<sup>12</sup>.

### **An overview of achievements in sugar reduction in different CEEREAL countries**

France	Between 2011 and 2017, the sugar content decreased by 15% across the ready-to-eat breakfast cereal category.
Germany	The aim of reducing the total sugar content of products marketed to children, weighted by their sales, by an average of at least 20% by 2025 as compared to 2012, has already been met.
Italy	The target to further reduce average levels of sugars in products on the market targeted to children and “all family” products eaten by children, which was set in 2015, was met in February 2018.
Portugal	Currently, a 10% sugar reduction objective for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals is running until end 2022, referring to 80% of the total stock-keeping unit sales volume. An interim report will be published in the first half of 2022.
Spain	In 2018, the Spanish breakfast cereal association, as part of a broader commitment of FIAB (the Spanish Food and Drink Federation), agreed a 10% reduction of the median content of total sugars in children's chocolate breakfast cereals. The commitment ended in December 2020. In 2021, AESAN (the Spanish food safety agency) started the final evaluation to confirm if the agreements had been reached. The results are expected in Q1 of 2022.
UK	Breakfast cereals manufacturers have cut added sugars from recipes by nearly 20% since 2010. A sugar reduction programme was initiated by the UK Government in 2017 with the target of a 5% sugar reduction (sales weighted average) required for year one, and 20% reduction in overall sugars by 2020. In May 2018, the breakfast cereals category met the initial 5% sugar reduction ambition for year one. In the Year 3 Progress report published in October 2020, the breakfast cereal category was commended for achieving one of the biggest reductions in sales weighted average sugars – down by 13.3%

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<sup>12</sup> Confédération suisse (2016). *Ordonnance du DFI concernant l'information sur les denrées alimentaires* (OIDAI), Article 42a, du 16 décembre 2016 (Etat le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2020). <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2017/158/fr>