

MARKS AND SPENCER (M&S) - WRITTEN EVIDENCE (FDO0126)

M&S update for the Lords Food, Diet and Obesity Committee

We have noted that as part of the Committee's work on food, diet and obesity there have been a few references made in relation to Marks & Spencer. We thought it would be helpful therefore to provide some background information on how we approach public health.

We have a long history of helping customers make healthier choices, in 2000 we launched our calorie controlled 'Count on us' range, in 2005 we created our 'Eat Well' logo to identify healthier choices and in 2007 we were the first retailer to introduce colour-coded front of pack nutritional information before it became the industry standard.

Our vision is to make it easy and inspiring for families to eat well with no compromise on taste and always giving trusted value; the best possible quality at the best possible price. Last year, 51% of our total food sales came from healthier products. Within this 42% came from our 'Eat Well' range of products which are all labelled with the Eat Well sunflower logo and are nutritionally balanced with a health benefit that meets scientific criteria endorsed by the British Nutrition Foundation. None of our Eat Well products are restricted under the HFSS Promotions Legislation.

We have now set ourselves a new target to **continue growing sales of healthier foods to 70%** sales tonnage by the end of 2024/2025. This includes our Eat Well range, and other credible healthier options with demonstrable nutrition claims (e.g. reduced sugar), that must also meet the government salt / calorie targets.

Our **Remarksable products are price benchmarked** against key competitors and covers key grocery staples that customers buy every day. We're committed to always having at least a third of our Remarksable products as Eat Well and are consistently overachieving this, averaging over 50% being Eat Well.

Specifically, we are supporting customers to make healthier choices through the following three pillars:

1. Increasing healthier choices for customers

- **We continually improve our existing products through an extensive reformulation programme**, to recreate our delicious products while trying to remove unnecessary ingredients, including sugar, calories, and salt. In the last year we have reduced the levels of fat, salt and sugar from key categories including:
 - **Reformulation across pizza, resulting in 13 tonnes of salt removed from our customers baskets per year.**
 - **Reformulation and relaunch of our breakfast cereals**

and toppers range, achieving a 15% reduction in sugar and 32% reduction in salt per 100g on average.

- The salt and sugar reformulation targets are embedded within our 'Healthy' criteria, ensuring they are considered at every stage of development.
- As part of our health strategy launched at the beginning of 2023, we have launched two new benefit-led sub-brands, which target a specific nutrient need or health outcome. 'High Protein' and 'Good Gut'. Each respective range has strict nutritional criteria and prominent health claims. Over 50 new products have been created within these ranges and a further 20 existing products have been redeveloped or redesigned to be appropriate.
- Continuing to lead the way in health innovation, in January 2024 **M&S launched the world-first collaboration with nutrition-science company ZOE**, bringing to market the M&S x ZOE Gut Shot, which quickly became our number 1 selling line across the drinks category. The product itself was co-created with Professor Tim Spector, designed to meet specific nutrition criteria, such as providing 14 different live strains of bacteria delivering over 5 billion live cultures and being high in fibre.
- **We take a responsible approach to the ingredients you will find in M&S food and aim to develop our foods using processes as close to the kitchen as possible.** We continuously review our products, aiming to only use ingredients you'd find in your store cupboard wherever possible. We do not permit MSG, artificial colours, artificial flavourings or numerous additives such as Aspartame in any of our own brand products, when other grocery retailers do.

2. **Communicating clearly to customers**

- **We make it easy for customers to identify and choose healthier products in store.** Our Eat Well Sunflower logo signposts healthier choices, and can now be found on the packaging of nearly 2000 products. An M&S product only achieves the Eat Well health seal of approval if it fulfils evidence based, nutritional criteria informed by the Government's Eat Well guide and developed by our nutrition team, in consultation with the British Nutrition Foundation.
- In 2022, **we launched our biggest ever health campaign**, Eat Well Play Well, through partnering with the UK's national football teams and their football associations to use the power of football to encourage families to make healthier food choices. The campaign has already successfully raised awareness of the Eat Well seal of approval. Previous activity included incentivising customers to make healthy choices with a competition through our Sparks loyalty programme and last summer, we **upweighted broadcast advertising** support for the campaign on TV and radio as well as extensive in store marketing signposting customers to Eat Well products. Knowing that 79% of parents claim their children would be more likely to eat healthy food like fresh fruit and vegetables if they thought their favourite players ate them, we're really proud to be one of the few sports sponsorships promoting positive healthy eating messages for kids in a way that is engaging, relatable and helps drive change.
- **We are committed to responsible marketing.** This means for example, using filters on YouTube and Facebook to ensure we never directly advertise any HFSS products to children under the age of 18, restricting the sale of energy drinks to under 16s in our stores and provide unit and calorie information on our alcohol labels.
- To allow customers to make informed decisions, we use **clear front of pack nutritional labelling**, with full five colour coded nutrients wherever possible or calories only where space is limited.
- In the coming year, we'll be dialling up our existing '**Ask the Nutritionist**' service to support more customers with their nutrition queries and share common questions.
- We have also trialled new ways of helping to **nudge customers to make healthier choices**, such as experimenting in the food environment and in-store locations, for example, by dual merchandising certain produce items.

3. **Ensuring we have fresh, healthy food at every price point**

- In all our stores we make efforts to keep healthy and nutritionally balanced items at low, affordable prices. M&S' latest Family Matters Index shows the focus on value for families has increased since the beginning of the year and healthy eating is also a growing priority with 30% of families looking to eat more healthily in the coming months. We are therefore working to deliver great value across healthy food.
- Our **Remarksable products are price benchmarked** against

key competitors and we're committed to always having at least a third of our Remarkable products as EatWell and are consistently overachieving this, averaging over 50% being Eat Well, ensuring healthy and affordable options. For example, we currently have cucumbers on offer at 90p, garden peas at £1.45, free range eggs at £1.30 and tuna chunks at 90p. As part of our **investment in price, since January** M&S has dropped or locked the price on over 80 Eat Well products to help customers feel confident in choosing a balanced diet, from M&S Slow Reared, Higher Welfare Chicken Breast Fillets (570g- cut by 13% to £6.50) and Extra Lean 5% mince beef (cut by 15% to £4.25), to Broccoli Crowns (325g – cut by 17% to £1.25) and Wholemeal Bloomer bread (cut by 11% to £2).

- Over the past four years we have significantly **reduced the number of multibuy promotions** in our stores, focusing instead on everyday Trusted Value across our food business. We no longer run multibuy offers on products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) despite the Government restriction on this type of offer not starting until October 2025.
- Through our Fresh Market Specials, we consistently offer customers amazing value on a range of fruit and vegetables exclusively from trusted M&S Select Farms and these are displayed prominently at the front of our stores. Our current Fresh Market Specials include Mushrooms at 85p, Tangerines at £1 and a pack of our Red Delicious Apples for a £1.

16 April 2024