

FAQ for Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) revised guidelines, in view of the extension of Nutri-Grade to salt, sauces, seasonings, instant noodles and cooking oil (SSSIO)

Alignment of HCS criteria to Nutri-Grade measures

1. How will the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) criteria for SSSIO products be aligned with Nutri-Grade? Will the grading thresholds be similar?

The HCS guidelines will be revised to align with Nutri-Grade by adopting the same 23 sub-categories across SSSIO products. HCS guideline will also include additional nutrient of concern (i.e. sodium, sugar and/or sat fat where relevant) in addition to existing criteria. The HCS guidelines will also be revised to align with the thresholds for Nutri-Grade, such that all HCS products would either be Grade A or B.

This alignment aims to ensure consistency in the standards set across all HPB's initiatives and programmes to minimise confusion to industry and consumers. In addition, the revised HCS criteria aim to encourage industry to reformulate products by taking step wise reduction to provide a good variety of healthier choices for consumers.

2. How were the grading thresholds developed?

As products endorsed by HCS represent a healthier segment within each sub-category, the thresholds for HCS subcategories must minimally meet the threshold of Nutri-Grade B. We determined the thresholds for the Nutri-Grade grading system based on an analysis of products in our local market. This ensures that the grading system is relevant and beneficial to Singaporeans, and practicable for the industry. By adopting a differentiated grading system, where specific thresholds are defined for each product sub-category, we can encourage reformulation within each product sub-category, while preserving the diversity of salt, sauces, seasonings, instant noodles and cooking oil products for Singaporeans to choose from.

3. Why is there still a need to apply for HCS given that these products will be subjected to the extended Nutri-Grade measures?

The extended Nutri-Grade measures will complement and co-exist with the HCS. The Nutri-Grade label is mandatory for Grade C and D products, to highlight products with high levels of the nutrients of concern. This contributes to the policy intent of helping consumers identify products with higher levels of nutrients of concern and make more informed, healthier choices.

On the other hand, HCS is voluntary and serves as a positive, visual nudge to encourage consumers to choose the healthier options within the same category of products. HCS also plays additional role on top of positive A/B Nutri-Grade label, by allowing companies to promote other positive attributes (e.g. wholegrains in instant noodles). It is beneficial to

retain the HCS, as it has attained brand equity over the years and is widely recognised and used by Singaporeans to guide their food purchases.

4. Will there be any support or resources provided to help manufacturers transition to the revised HCS guidelines?

HPB's Healthier Ingredient Development Scheme (HIDS) is a grant scheme that supports suppliers in developing and commercialising healthier ingredients, particularly to support their sell-through to the food service sector. The HIDS was introduced for oils in 2017, sauces in 2018, and salt in 2022, with enhancements implemented in subsequent years. In 2024, the HIDS grant support for sauces was also enhanced to increase the funding support to sauce suppliers. Eligible suppliers can receive up to \$600,000, an increase from \$500,000, in product development, marketing and trade promotion support.

Furthermore, HPB will provide a time-limited expansion of grant support for packaging-related supportable items under the HDS for all eligible HCS SSSIO products. This expansion includes other packaging-related costs, such as change of printing plates and proofing, to better help manufacturers to reformulate their products to meet the HCS guidelines.

Under the Healthier Choice Development Scheme (HDS), manufacturers can obtain support in the areas of product development, packaging, and certification. For more information, please refer to HPB's website at: [Healthier Choice Symbol Development Scheme HDS](#)

5. We are given two-years grace period to comply with the revised guidelines. Can HPB look into a longer grace period?

For past HCS revisions, a one-year grace period is typically provided for industry to meet revised guidelines. Given the significant changes in this revision, we are extending the usual one-year grace period to two years, to give manufacturers more time to reformulate their products, increasing the variety of healthier choices for consumers. For SSSIO products, this timeline is also aligned with the effective date for the Nutri-Grade extension in mid-2027, to minimise the number of label changes required.

Affected sub-categories

6. Why are we reviewing the salt, sauces, seasonings, instant noodles and cooking oil category?

Excessive intake of sodium and saturated fat are key risk factors for chronic diseases such as hypertension and hyperlipidaemia, which are public health concerns for Singaporeans. The National Nutrition Survey 2022 showed that nine in ten Singapore residents exceeded the recommended sodium limit of 2,000 mg a day and on average, consumed about twice the daily limit. Similarly, among Singapore residents, saturated fat accounted for 36% of total fat consumed, exceeding the recommendation of no more than 30%.

The key sources of sodium intake among Singapore residents are from salt, sauces, seasonings and instant noodles, and the key source of saturated fat intake is cooking oil. We will focus on targeting these product categories, to reduce Singaporeans' sodium and saturated fat intake.

7. What led to the review of the wholegrain criteria in instant noodles?

The current revision is in response to industry feedback on the challenges faced by manufacturers in maintaining the palatability of instant noodles products trying to meet the wholegrain criteria. By putting the wholegrain criteria as optional, this will ease the reformulation process for manufacturers to create healthier instant noodles, while tackling the nutrient of concerns in instant noodles, i.e. sodium and saturated fat.

Instant noodles labelled with the HCS now will carry the primary tagline of "Lower in Sodium". If these healthier (i.e. lower in sodium) noodles further meet the wholegrain requirement, companies can choose to include the secondary, optional, tagline of "Higher in Wholegrains".

8. How will this revision in the wholegrain criteria for instant noodles affect other wholegrain initiatives in the future?

There are no changes to other HPB initiatives and guidelines such as "*My Healthy Plate*". Wholegrain is a component of diet quality and good sources of wholegrains include staples such as brown rice and wholemeal bread.

9. Why did the HCS criteria for some sub-categories (e.g. instant noodles, recipe mixes) change from "as prepared" to "as sold"?

This approach is aligned with that used in the World Health Organization global sodium benchmarks and other countries' sodium targets. The approach of using nutrient values in the product as sold for grading seeks to spur reformulation of the product and minimize risk of abuse.

10. What are the efforts by HPB to generate demand for healthier SSSIO products?

We will continue to do more to increase the adoption of healthier alternatives, among consumers and F&B operators. We understand that it will take time for Singaporeans to lighten their palates with less salt, sauces and seasonings.

In the F&B setting, we are ramping up efforts to deepen our engagement with food operators to make their dishes healthier, and to encourage voluntary, store-front labelling (e.g. healthier choice identifiers or Less Salt, More Taste stickers) to help consumers identify stores that offer healthier dishes, either by using healthier ingredients or using less salt or sauces when cooking.

We will also continue with our multi-year public education campaigns to increase consumer awareness of the need to lower sodium intake, run promotional activities, such as the nationwide Eat, Drink, Shop, Healthy (EDSH) challenge, to encourage consumer demand for healthier items.

11. If my current HCS products no longer qualify under the new criteria, what can I do?

The HCS guidelines are revised to align with the Nutri-Grade measures, such that all HCS products would either be Grade A or B. Manufacturers can tap on the HIDS healthier choice development scheme to reformulate their products towards the revised HCS guidelines, to provide a good variety of healthier choices for consumers.