

Dairy UK Position Paper SACN Report on Saturated Fat and Public Health August 2019

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Background

On the 1st August the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition published its [final report on Saturated fats and health](#) and accompanying [press release](#). After reviewing the guidelines on saturated fat intake and its effect on health, the Committee did not advise any changes to current dietary recommendations for saturated fat.

Specifically, the report recommends that:

- ***The dietary reference value for saturated fats remains unchanged:***
The [population] average contribution of saturated fatty acids to [total] dietary energy be reduced to no more than about 10%. This recommendation applies to adults and children aged 5 years and older.
- ***Saturated fats are substituted with unsaturated fats:***
More evidence has become available supporting the substitution of poly unsaturated fatty acids with mono unsaturated fatty acids. This recommendation is made in the context of existing UK Government recommendations for macronutrients and energy
- ***The government considers strategies to reduce the average contribution of saturated fatty acids to total dietary energy to no more than about 10%:***
Risk managers should be mindful of the available evidence in relation to substitution of saturated fats with different types of unsaturated fats and ensure that strategies are consistent with wider dietary recommendations, including trans fats.

Other points to note from the report:

- Cereals and cereal products (mainly biscuits, buns, cakes, pastries and fruit pies), milk and milk products (mainly cheese and milk), and meat and meat products were the main contributors to saturated fat intake in all age groups.
- Milk and milk products (especially whole milk) made a larger contribution to saturated fat intake for children aged 4 to 10 years compared to other age groups (Roberts et al, 2018). The main sources of saturated fats have changed little between 1986/87 and 2008/16. The overall percentage contribution of milk and milk products to daily saturated fat intake remained unchanged, at around 21%.

- A decline in whole milk consumption led to a reduction in the contribution of whole milk to saturated fats from approximately 11% to 2% of the average daily saturated fat intake in adults.
- The contribution of fat spreads and butter to saturated fat intake has declined (from approximately 17% to 9% of the average daily saturated fat intake) mainly due to a decreased intake of butter, especially among adults aged 19 to 64 years (Roberts et al, 2018).

Dairy UK Position – for industry use

Dairy UK responded to SACN's call for evidence and comments on the draft report in 2018, providing a number of research studies not included in their original literature search. However, due to the strict remit for the report, SACN was unable to consider the impact of individual saturated fatty acids and specific saturated fat containing foods/food groups, and so these studies were not included in the report. Dairy UK would welcome the creation of a future SACN working group to consider these points.

We note that the report neither addresses the effects of specific individual saturated fatty acids and/or whole foods, nor makes any future recommendations for SACN to consider these points. However, SACN does note that these are limitations of the report.

Media Statement – for external use

While we understand that SACN had a very narrow remit for this review, the everyday reality is that people consume food and not individual nutrients. At a certain point public health policy makers must consider the totality of evidence available on saturated fats, which clearly supports looking at whole diets and whole foods.

We would like to see SACN conduct a review of the evidence around the matrix effects of food as a whole and to commit to making this an area of focus in the future.

Dairy products contain both saturated and unsaturated fats, alongside a wealth of other nutrients such as calcium, protein, B vitamins, potassium, iodine and phosphorous. Clearly dairy foods are not junk foods; they are nutrient-rich, natural and an important part of a balanced diet.

It is crucial that the public are not unduly frightened about consuming dairy products and move to replace them with highly processed foods that contain little nutrition by comparison.