



Portion Sizes Rationale

Last update: September 2008

Introduction

In September 2008, CEEREAL announced an important milestone in its continual quest to strengthen and improve the way its members communicate nutrition information to consumers by agreeing upon harmonised portion sizes for all breakfast cereal products marketed by its members across the EU. These portion sizes will be fully implemented by all CEEREAL member companies by January 2010.

While nutrition information provided per 100g or 100ml helps the consumer compare the nutrient content of different kinds of foodstuffs in general, it fails to provide information on the actual nutrient content intended to be consumed, especially if the average portion of the consumed food is significantly larger or smaller (as is the case for breakfast cereals) than the 100g /100ml baseline. By providing nutrition information on a per portion basis, consumers are empowered with a more realistic idea as to which foods they can consume within a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

In establishing standard portion sizes for the industry the overall aim is to provide information to consumers in a consistent, harmonised manner which is both realistic and reasonable, in line with what people consume and, at the same time, providing adequate energy and nutrient intake.

CEEREAL members have agreed on four different portion sizes for their products, namely 30g, 40g, 45g and 2 biscuits as detailed in the following table:

CEEREAL Portion sizes			
30g	40g	45g	2 Biscuits
Toasted and/or extruded flakes	Toasted and/or extruded flakes with inclusions*	Muesli (all type)	Big biscuit type cereals
Toasted and/or extruded flakes with inclusions*	Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals with inclusions*	Filled shredded cereals	
Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals with inclusions*	Rolled oats and steamed cooked flakes from rye, barley and wheat	Granola	
Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals	Shredded cereals		
Filled extruded pillows, i.e. pillows with cream inside	Mini Biscuits		

*Owing to density variations and different functional benefits of inclusions, products with inclusions may fall in the 30 or 40 gram portion sizes. Inclusions are defined as non-cereal pieces/ingredients such as but not limited to fruit, chocolate, nuts, seeds, etc. A cluster inclusion of cereal and soy or cereal and nuts is an inclusion while a cereal-only cluster is not.

Please note: Owing to the high number of very diverse products in the sector there may be a few niche products that are not covered by this table.

In defining these portion sizes, CEEREAL considered three different important criteria:

- history of use,
- product density,
- intake data.

Criteria for defining portion sizes

History of Use

The breakfast cereal industry has a long history of providing nutrition information on a per portion basis as well as per 100g. These portion sizes have remained unchanged for decades (the first reference to a portion size, 1 ounce – the equivalent to 28g – appeared on packs in the 1940s), and consumers have built up concrete experience as to what these portions constitute, particularly as they have often been supported by communications on pack describing in tangible terms how much a portion actually constitutes e.g., in terms of number of spoons or cups. The historical use of portion sizes has therefore played an important role in defining the current harmonised portion sizes of the industry.

Product Density

When ready-to-eat cereals are poured out of the pack, most people decide how much they want to eat by judging the volume in the bowl, rather than by weight. Given the fact that the product density of different breakfast cereals varies quite substantially (e.g. granolas and mueslis tend to be more dense than puffed or extruded products), different portion sizes have been agreed for products of differing densities. Denser cereal products have been allocated a larger portion size by weight (40g or 45g) while less dense products have been allocated the smaller portion size by weight (30g).

Actual Consumption Data

The annual per capita consumption of breakfast cereals in Europe is around 2kg but varies between countries from 0.5 kg in Italy to 8 kg in Ireland (the highest per capita consumption in the world) where breakfast cereals are consumed between 5-6 times per week. The data for average portion sizes in Europe also vary from country to country, but usually lie between 30-50g mirroring the agreed CEEREAL portion sizes of between 30-45g. Supporting data are based on mean consumption values. The lower and higher percentile are provided when available.

- A study in Belgium by the Scientific Institute for Public Health in association with the Free University of Brussels and the University of Gent carried out in 2004 based on 481 consumers revealed that consumer ate 30.1g in average of breakfast cereal in a single sitting.
- A study by the Danish Food Institute at Denmark's Technical University found that the average portion of breakfast cereals was around 35g (Danish National Food Survey 2000-2004).
- A study undertaken in Ireland by the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance in 1997-1999 based on a sample of 1,379 people revealed that the average male adult consumer of breakfast cereals eats 48.6g in a single sitting while the average female adult eats 41.7g. The mean portion size of children 5 to 12 years was 39g for boys and 27g for girls.
- In France, children consume 23.1g/d and adults 28.3g/d (data from the new INCA2 2008 survey). This study also reported that the 15 - 24 year old people most frequently consume 40 - 60g of breakfast cereals per portion whereas younger and older people mostly consume portions of between 25 and 30g.
- The 2000/2001 UK National Diet & Nutrition Survey reported that, for all women consumers, the mean intakes of wholegrain & high fibre breakfast cereals and other breakfast cereals was 274g and 133g respectively in the seven day period (i.e. 39g and 19g per day on average). Further analysis of the children's NDNS carried out by the Food Standards Agency has shown that portion size does vary with

age with younger consumers eating approximately 25g and 15 to 18 years olds consuming up to 60g per day. TNS data indicates that the annual number of breakfast cereal meal occasions in the UK is 9,218 million, and Nielsen data indicates that the annual volume of breakfast cereals sold in UK is 454,843 tonnes. Thus, this combination of total volume and total breakfast cereal meal occasions indicates an average portion size of 49.3g per meal occasion.

- The KIGGS study 2007 demonstrated that average portion sizes in Germany are 29g/day for 13-14 year old boys and 23g/day for girls of the same age. (Forschungsbericht Ernährungsstudie als KiGGS-Modul (EsKiMo) im Auftrag des BMELV).