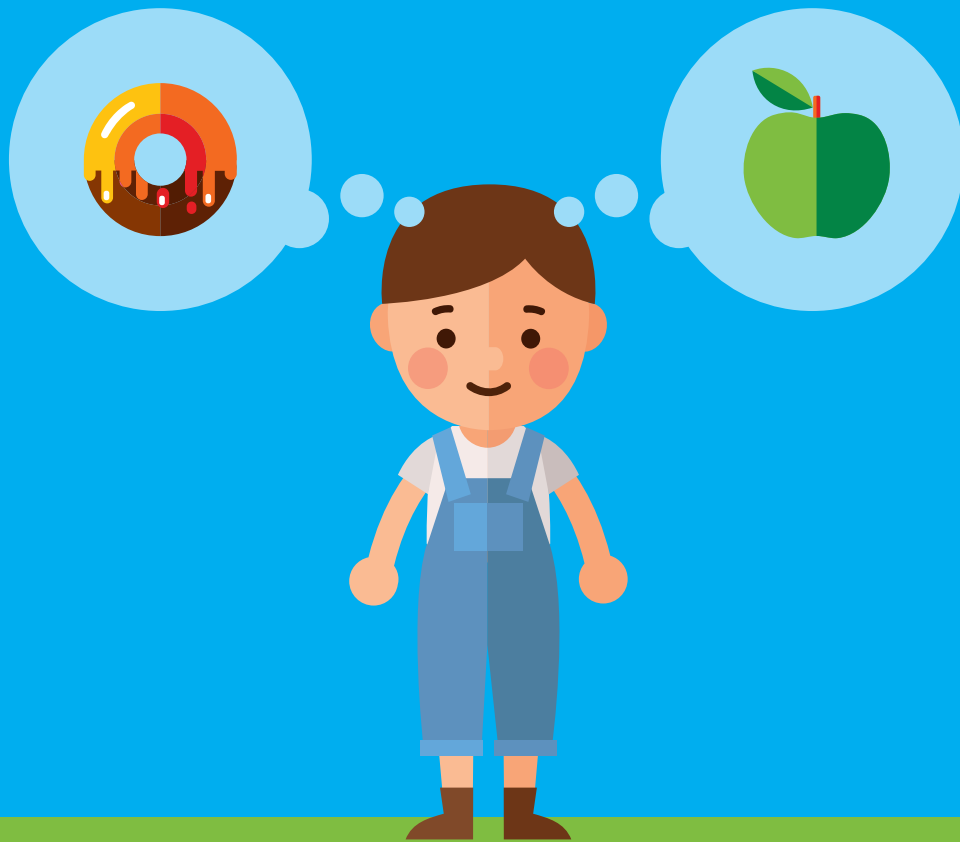


ENTICEMENT: FROM UNHEALTHY TO HEALTHY CHOICES



TO WHAT EXTENT DO DUTCH SUPERMARKETS
RESPECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH?

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RESPECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH?

In conducting this study, UNICEF the Netherlands provides insight into what role supermarkets could play in providing children with healthy food.

September 2020

The data collection and analyses of the ranges and promotion activities of children's products in Dutch supermarkets were carried out by the Questionmark Foundation on behalf of UNICEF the Netherlands.

Foreword



Suzanne Laszlo Executive Director,
UNICEF the Netherlands



Shundell Leming (18 years old)
Member of the UNICEF youth panel
> As a member of the youth panel, you can
have a say in what UNICEF does.

Suzanne Laszlo:

"We believe that children's right to a healthy diet is not properly reflected in the policy and practice of Dutch supermarkets".

Suzanne: *Have you been to the supermarket during this coronavirus pandemic? Did you want to spend as little time in the supermarket as possible?*

Shundell: I think I may have been to the supermarket twice a week in recent times. I've noticed that I now go to the shop for a specific purpose. I make a list of what I need beforehand, and I'm in and out of the shop within fifteen minutes.

Suzanne: If you think carefully about what you need beforehand, you'll probably make fewer impulse purchases. That might mean that you also think more carefully about what is healthy.

Suzanne: *Do you think about healthy food a lot?*

Shundell: I'm more aware about it at the moment because my friends and I have decided to encourage each other to choose healthy options.

Suzanne: *If you look back at when you were at secondary school, what would have helped you make better food choices?*

Shundell: The value for money! Even though you might not have much money to spend, you still want to get something from the supermarket. There's a big difference between four doughnuts for € 1, for instance, and a salad sandwich costing € 3.50. Less of a price difference between healthy and less healthy products would make it easier to opt for a healthy diet.

Shundell Leming

"Less of a price difference between healthy and less healthy products would make it easier to opt for a healthy diet".

Shundell: *What did you think was the biggest surprise in the report?*

Suzanne: That's a good question! Besides the fact that fewer than 30 per cent of the children's products that could be compatible with the Wheel of Five actually meet the criteria for doing so, it appears that only 11 of the 148 children's drink products are compatible with the Wheel. For years, I gave my children those drink cartons out of ignorance because I thought they were healthy. The positive thing I noticed is that some of the supermarkets are really focused on healthy eating, for example by reducing sugar in products. Besides this positive development, we all really need to do something about the lack of knowledge regarding the range of children's products on offer.

Shundell: That's certainly true.

Shundell: *Do you think that it's a matter for the government or for the supermarkets?*

Suzanne: I think it's a matter for all of us. Good, healthy food for children is essential. Good nutrition is a child's right, which is why we are working on this at UNICEF. If you are given healthy food as a child, you become resilient. You become less prone to illness and grow up healthier. Good nutrition is also essential to doing well at school. We need to be aware of this because it's extremely important.

Suzanne: *What things did you notice and what do you consider to be the most important recommendation?*

Shundell: I was particularly struck by the conclusion regarding baby products. There are very few baby products that are genuinely healthy. This is important as we are talking about vulnerable children. Parents expect products for young children to be healthy. Often, this is not the case and I think this is unacceptable! There is also a lack of awareness about what is healthy and what isn't, including among young people like me. It could be made easier by making labels clearer and by separating healthy products from unhealthy products in the supermarket. You could then be sure of actually choosing the healthy option.

One interesting recommendation in the report is that everyone should play a crucial part in children's development. As a society we are responsible for the next generation, so this is something we can change!

It is especially important because of the negative consequences of an unhealthy diet. Lidl and Aldi have recently banned the sale of energy drinks to children under the age of 14 but the supermarket sector does need to act together in this regard. Energy drinks have a negative impact on the health of adolescents, especially at the age where they are still developing. In short, I'm not in favour of energy drinks for young people.

Suzanne: Great, I totally agree! The report offers concrete recommendations and guidelines for supermarkets and the government. We believe that children's right to a healthy diet is not properly reflected in the policy and practice of Dutch supermarkets. This study is crucial in making this more transparent. In addition, we hope that the recommendations of this report are taken on board and that the composition and promotion of children's products in Dutch supermarkets help parents to make healthier choices for children. The support does exist, as supermarkets, the government and consumers are already focusing on healthy food choices. Now is the right time to step up. Of course, it's fine to have something unhealthy now and again. That's only normal. We just have to help each other make the right choices.

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Dr Victor Aguayo, Associate Director of the UNICEF Nutrition Programme Division

“It is crucial for children and adolescents that healthy food be available, affordable, and appealing. Food retailers have a critical role to play in doing the right thing for children. So do governments, which must create a level playing field for all retailers and ensure that their actions align with children’s best interests. Failure to act now undermines children’s right to adequate nutrition. Some strides in tackling this issue in the Netherlands are impressive, but more needs to be done”

Summary

Good nutrition is a child's right, For many children, being 'well-fed' is not an everyday reality. They eat too little of what is good for them and too much of what they don't need. As a result, they are at greater risk of developing serious illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases or diabetes, as well as psychological disorders such as depression or social isolation.

An environment that encourages the consumption of good food ensures that the intake of sugar, fats and salt is limited. Food producers and suppliers play a key role here, as do governments who can create conditions, through guidelines or legislation, in which the interests of children are truly respected. When it comes to the supply of food, supermarkets play a pivotal role. They also play an important role in the lives of children – as a place that sells sweets and snacks, gives children their first part-time job and which forms an important part of the neighbourhood, sometimes as a place to hang out. In view of this major impact, UNICEF the Netherlands has developed a vision on how children's rights could be better respected in supermarkets. In doing so, we hope to provide supermarkets with insight into the positive and negative impact they can have on children. We also show what steps supermarkets can take to protect children and respect their rights.

To what extent do supermarkets help Dutch children to eat healthy food? In this report, we first discuss the products aimed at children in the supermarket and look at whether children's health is an aspect covered by the CSR (corporate social responsibility) policy of Dutch supermarkets. We also look at the current supermarket ranges, promotions for children's products and the extent to which these products contribute to children's health. To do so, we use the Wheel of Five (*Schijf van Vijf*), a tool developed by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, based on the Guidelines for a Healthy Diet from the Health Council of the Netherlands.

Finally, we mention some specific measures that supermarkets could implement in their stores and provide recommendations for manufacturers, sector organizations and the government.

MAIN OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS REPORT

01 There is not enough focus on healthy food for children in the policy and practice of Dutch supermarkets.

Children's health is only mentioned in the CSR policy of Dutch supermarkets in relation to a number of specific topics. For example, the Plus supermarket chain points out that it does not display brands that market to children at eye level. At Jumbo, Lidl and Aldi supermarkets, child-directed marketing is specifically used to promote own-brand products to children that are compatible with the Wheel of Five. Various supermarkets – such as Albert Heijn, Coop and Jumbo – want to encourage children to consume healthy products by handing out free fruit, for instance, or by organizing a treasure hunt or supermarket safari. Several supermarkets also give children

a say in their policy by asking for their advice on child-related issues. Plus is making an urgent appeal to politicians for a widely accepted minimum age of 18 for the purchase of energy drinks. Aldi and Lidl have already set a minimum age of 14 for it in their stores. However, when it comes to the core activities of supermarkets, such as their product ranges, store layout, promotions and price policy, children's rights and nutritional needs could be much better respected.

RECOMMENDATION

Focus on a healthy diet for children in the CSR policy and core activities of supermarkets.

02 Fewer than 30 per cent of the children's products that could be compatible with the Wheel of Five actually meet the criteria.

Although there is a lot of difference in the product ranges from one supermarket to another, the product range analysis shows that when viewed across the entire sector, fewer than 30 per cent of the almost 800 products that could be included in the Wheel of Five actually meet the criteria for doing so. As a result, parents and children are more likely to choose products that are excluded from the Wheel of Five, which makes it difficult to achieve a healthy eating pattern. The baby section, which only contains products for young children, does not comply with the guidelines for a healthy eating pattern for this age group. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre advises against giving children under the age of 4 products that are not included in the Wheel of Five. However, less than a third of the products in this section are included.

RECOMMENDATION

Move the products excluded from the Wheel of Five from the baby and toddler section to the section containing similar alternatives

so the baby section only contains healthy options for young children. Consumers can then opt for products that are included or not included in the Wheel of Five in the other product categories.

None of the children's desserts meet the criteria for the Wheel of Five. In some categories, such as children's breakfast cereals, the products are even less healthy than those aimed at adults. In the categories in this study that are excluded from the Wheel of Five – such as on-the-go biscuits, children's drinks and some of the sandwich fillings – the majority of the products are not suitable as a daily selection.

RECOMMENDATION

Improve children's products in the different categories so that more of the items offered are included in the Wheel of Five. This ensures that children's products have equal or better nutritional value than the category average.

03 Supermarkets are taking small steps to use the promotion of children's products for healthy options.

Supermarkets do not show any hesitation when it comes to special offers on unhealthy products for children. More than half of the leaflets issued during the period studied contained a special offer in at least one of the child categories. The special offers were mainly for categories that have few products in the Wheel of Five. If there are Wheel of Five products within a category, these are not found to be on special offer any more often than the products excluded from the Wheel of Five.

Around 25 per cent of all children's products in the study employed child-directed marketing, such as a cartoon character, or other drawing or text that included words like 'baby' or 'kids' on the packaging. There is a significant difference in the amount of child-directed marketing used per category. It seems to depend on the big-brand names in the category and the number of own-brand

versions available. In particular, children's breakfast cereals, children's desserts and children's drinks are still widely marketed to children. There were no licensed characters and only a few other children's pictures found on unhealthy own-brand products. However, these products are regularly positioned next to big-name brands that often display child-directed marketing on the packaging. To truly protect children, there should be no form of marketing whatsoever directed at children and adolescents under the age of 18 on products that do not benefit their health.

RECOMMENDATION

Only advertise children's products for the purpose of recommending healthy alternatives: the versions that are compatible with the Wheel of Five. We already see this being done for a number of healthy own-brand products.

1. Introduction

A well-fed generation. Children have the right to a healthy life, to grow up healthily and to develop as well as possible. This means that children must be protected from harmful influences, must receive the best possible healthcare and must have a sufficient and healthy diet.

Article 6: Every child has the right to life, survival and development.

Article 24: Every child has the right to the best possible health and to health care.

Good nutrition is a child's right. Our dream is for all children to receive good nutrition on a structural basis so they can develop optimally, both mentally and physically. Good nutrition helps children grow better, become healthier and perform better at school. For many children, however, good nutrition is not an everyday reality. On a global scale, 1 in 3 children under the age of 5 do not receive the right nutrients to be able to grow properly, causing them to be visibly undernourished or overweight. In addition, half of all children under the age of 5 suffer from 'hidden hunger', a condition in which they do not get enough vitamins and other essential nutrients. Around the world, children are eating too little of what is good for them and too much of what they don't need. (source: www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children-2019)

In the Netherlands, there are few figures available on deficiencies in vitamins and minerals. We do know, however, that only a few children follow the guidelines for a healthy eating pattern: 95 per cent do not eat enough vegetables each day¹, 80 per cent do not eat enough fruit² and 1 in 5 children and adolescents drink sugary drinks every day³. We also know that 1 in 8 children are overweight.⁴ Apart from the fact that they are at a greater risk of developing diabetes, cardiovascular diseases or sleeping problems, they also experience psychological problems such as depression or social isolation more often.⁵ An environment that provides healthy food and encourages its consumption makes it possible for essential nutritional requirements to be met and the consumption of sugar, fats and salt to be limited. To support this, UNICEF has collaborated with the Global Alliance for

Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in consultation with various other parties to develop the Innocenti Framework on Food Systems for Children and Adolescents,⁶ which explains all the direct and underlying factors that shape the diets of children and adolescents.

Children need food that provides the right nutrients for every stage of their development. However, our food systems are complex and it is not easy to find effective measures to combat the overconsumption of unhealthy foods. Food producers and suppliers have a critical role to play in doing the right thing for children. So do governments, which can introduce guidelines or legislation to ensure that the interests of children are truly respected. If healthy foods are made available, affordable and appealing, children and families will make better choices.

¹ RIVM. Vegetable consumption among 4–12 year olds. [*Groenteconsumptie van 4-12 jarigen*] Results of VCP 2012–2014. December 2017

² RIVM. Fruit consumption among 4–12 year olds. [*Fruitconsumptie van 4-12 jarigen*] Results of VCP 2012–2014. December 2017

³ Stevens G, Van Dorsselaer S, Boer M, de Roos S, Duinhof E, ter Bogt T, van den Eijnden R, Kuyper L, Visser D, Vollebergh W, de Looze M. Health and well-being of adolescents in the Netherlands [*Gezondheid en welzijn van jongeren in Nederland*] – HBSC 2017

⁴ CBS in cooperation with RIVM. Health survey/Lifestyle monitor: Excess weight in children [*Gezondheidsenquête/Leefstijlmonitor- Overgewicht kinderen*]. 2019

⁵ WHO. Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. 2016

⁶ UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti. Meeting report Food Systems for Children and Adolescents. 2018

Supermarkets play a pivotal role in the food industry. In view of this major impact, the vision developed by UNICEF the Netherlands on how children's rights can be better respected in supermarkets (see Section 3) also looks at children's health. In doing so, we hope to provide companies with insight into the positive and negative impact that supermarkets can have on children through their offer in stores. We also want to show what steps supermarkets can take to respect the rights of children in relation to a healthy diet. In supermarkets that focus on children's rights, the needs and rights of children and adolescents under 18 form an integral part of policy, activities and decisions. A supermarket's basic principles are then in line with the overarching principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ (see www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention).

THIS REPORT

The National Prevention Agreement⁸ was concluded in 2018 and contains social measures for the purpose of creating a healthier generation. It is crucial that an approach to prevention is started at the earliest possible age because children's eating habits largely continue once they reach adulthood. Changes to the body that are caused by an unhealthy diet are much more difficult to repair in later life.⁹

The agreement sets out a range of measures for reducing the percentages of children and adults that are overweight and obese, with some specific measures aimed at supermar-

kets. However, the RIVM has calculated that the current measures in the agreement are not ambitious enough to be able to achieve all the objectives.¹⁰

In this report, we look at whether children's health is included in the CSR policy of Dutch supermarkets. We also look at children's products in the current supermarket ranges, promotions for children's products and the extent to which these products contribute to a healthy diet for children. To do so, we use the Wheel of Five (*Schijf van Vijf*), a tool developed by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, based on the Guidelines for a Healthy Diet from the Health Council of the Netherlands.

In conducting this study, UNICEF the Netherlands aims to provide insight into what role supermarkets could play in providing children with good nutrition. We also provide concrete recommendations on how children's rights can be given top priority in day-to-day practice. The purpose of this exercise is not to emphasize the differences between supermarkets but to show where they could all make improvements.

We also put forward recommendations for manufacturers, sector organizations and the government.



What is learnt in the cradle lasts to the grave

In November 2019, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) conducted a quick scan literature study commissioned by UNICEF the Netherlands to examine the relationship between the eating habits of children (0–19 years) and obesity as a measure of health. The study shows that reducing children's consumption of sugary drinks and fat, and reducing their overall energy intake are the main areas for lowering the rate of obesity. In addition, the general recommendation remains to try and achieve a healthy and balanced diet for children that follows the guidelines of the Health Council and the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. If children adopt a healthy lifestyle at a young age, this also has positive effects when they are older.

⁷ UN. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989

⁸ Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. National Prevention Agreement. Making the Netherlands healthier [*Nationaal Preventieakkoord. Naar een gezonder Nederland*]. 2018

⁹ WHO. Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. 2016

¹⁰ RIVM, Quick scan of the possible impact of the National Prevention Agreement [*Quickscan mogelijke impact Nationaal Preventieakkoord*]. 2018

Marjon Bachra, Executive Director of Adolescents at a Healthy Weight [*Jongeren Op Gezond Gewicht, JOGG*]:
"JOGG makes the physical and social environments of children and adolescents healthier. Since supermarkets also have a responsibility to create a healthy food environment, we have entered into discussions with them; which can make a further contribution to this. We make it easier for children, adolescents and their parents or guardians to eat more healthily, exercise more and take enough time to relax. A healthy future starts with a healthy childhood".

A healthier life through the National Prevention Agreement

The parties that have signed the National Prevention Agreement have expressed the joint ambition to reduce the percentages of young people and adults that are overweight or obese. By 2040, the percentage of young people that are overweight must be reduced from 13.5 per cent to 9.1 per cent or less, and the percentage of young people that are obese must be reduced from 2.8 per cent to 2.3 per cent.

With this in mind, one of the ambitions that has been formulated is that everyone living in the Netherlands must have a healthy social, economic and physical environment that encourages them to lead a healthy life. Green neighbourhoods, health and welfare institutes, sports facilities, education, companies, hospitality and catering businesses, government buildings, supermarkets and private and public transport – all of these can contribute to a healthy living environment.

The concrete actions below have been set out specifically for supermarkets:

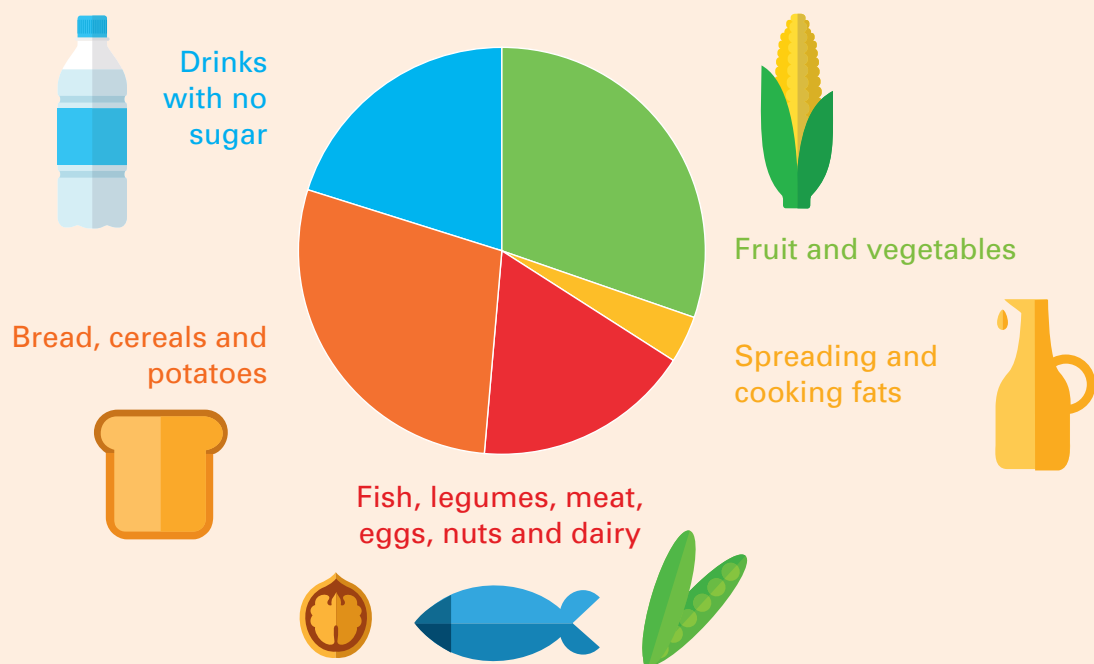
- Supermarkets, and hospitality and catering businesses will strive to achieve an annual growth in the consumption of products included in the Wheel of Five.
- Supermarkets will encourage consumers to buy more products that are included in the Wheel of Five, for example by making it clear which products meet the criteria. In conjunction with the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, they will look into expanding the options available to do so.
- Every year, 750 employees working in the fresh produce sections of supermarkets will follow a specific training module on good nutrition that focuses on healthy product composition, healthy products, a healthy weight and sustainability. This is more than double the previous number. A revamped module will be set up in collaboration with the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. This will enable fresh produce employees to answer consumer questions on labels, the Wheel of Five, the sugar, fat, salt and fibre content in products, food wastage, animal welfare and the impact of food on the environment.
- Supermarkets will also restrict the use of branded images, such as well-known cartoon characters, on packaging of children's products sold under their own brands.
- In supermarkets and at other retail outlets selling food products, the current path of product improvement will be accelerated and broadened. In all product groups, the aim is to create a range that contains less salt and fewer calories by focusing on products with less sugar and less (saturated) fat, and smaller portions.
- Supermarkets will commit to substantially reducing the number of calories in their own-brand soft drinks.

The Wheel of Five

The Wheel of Five is a scientifically-based information tool that shows what healthy eating is all about. The Wheel of Five offers the best combination of products that provide health benefits, produce sufficient energy and contain all essential nutrients. The Wheel of Five is based on products that, according to the latest scientific insights, are good for your body as they reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases and cancer, for instance.

If you eat foods that are compatible with the Wheel of Five, you will get enough minerals, vitamins, proteins, carbohydrates, fats and fibre. If you also limit how often you consume products that are excluded from the Wheel of Five; you will find it easier to keep the weight off and increase your likelihood of staying healthy as you grow older. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre has put together the Wheel of Five based on the opinions of the Health Council, calculations made by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and advice from various experts.

The 'Wheel of Five' of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre



Dr Ir. Gerda Feunekes, Executive Director of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre:

"At the Netherlands Nutrition Centre we know how important it is for children and adolescents to follow a healthy eating pattern. It is therefore important that the easiest choice for children and their parents to make is to choose healthy products, also in supermarkets. A greater range of healthy products, presented and priced attractively, and more healthy products than unhealthy products, makes the healthy choice the easy choice".

2. Do the product ranges in Dutch supermarkets promote children's health?

To what extent do supermarkets help Dutch children eat healthily? We studied the extent to which Dutch supermarkets fulfil the indicators for a supermarket that respects children's right to a healthy diet (see Section 2.4). In addition, the Questionmark Foundation analysed the range and promotion of children's products in stores on behalf of UNICEF the Netherlands (see Sections 2.2. and 2.3).

As part of this study, we looked at the CSR policy and, where available, the annual reports for 2019 from Albert Heijn, Jumbo, Lidl, Aldi, Plus, Coop, Spar, Deen, Dekamarkt, Dirk, Jan Linders and Ekoplaza. Examples of good practice were validated by the various chains and contain the most recent information. In addition, the Questionmark Foundation was commissioned by UNICEF the Netherlands to analyse two aspects of the supermarket as a food environment: the product range and the promotional policy.¹¹ Together, the supermarket chains in the study represent almost 85% of the market.¹²

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the sector; we do not discuss individual results or differences between supermarkets. A supermarket chain is only mentioned by name if it clearly supports children's health in a particular area, in order to set an example for other supermarkets.

2.1. What are children's products?

Although a supermarket's entire range can influence children's eating patterns, this report is limited to the range of children's products on offer. 'Children's products' are products that are aimed specifically at children although this distinction is not always obvious. Some products are clearly positioned as children's products, for example because the product name contains the word 'kids' or similar or because the supermarket has placed them in their 'children's products' category online. There are also products that are less explicitly aimed at children but which are similar to children's products in terms of composition or packaging, or are often

consumed by children in reality. In our study, we confined ourselves to those categories of children's products that can be found in all supermarkets, that have been positioned specifically for children and that form part of a daily eating pattern.

CHILD-DIRECTED MARKETING

Products can also be aimed explicitly at children through the use of child-directed marketing. In the Netherlands, this is regulated by the industry itself and via the Code for Advertising Directed at Children and Adolescents, the Advertising Code for Infant Formula and the Advertising Code for Food Products (RVV). The last two are particularly relevant for supermarkets, with the Advertising Code for Food Products containing a specific provision that concerns child-directed marketing. Marketing aimed at children is not permitted for children under the age of 13, unless it concerns advertising supported by an authority or advertising on packaging or on point-of-sale materials, such as displays, labels and stickers. Advertisements for healthy products aimed at children aged 7 to 12 is another exception that is allowed. In practice, this means there are no restrictions to advertising on shelves, on displays and even on packaging in supermarkets. A specific exception in the code states that children's idols that appeal to children aged 6 and under may not be used, however it is possible to use cartoon characters that have been created by the advertiser themselves. It is also possible to use children's idols that are aimed at children aged 6 and over, although these products must comply with the nutritional criteria in the code.

¹¹ This analysis is based on the product information available between November 2019 and March 2020 in the online stores of Albert Heijn, Plus, Jumbo, Deen, Coop, Dirk, Jan Linders and Ekoplaza, on the packaging of the regular product range in the largest Lidl branch and on special offers shown in the PDF versions of the leaflets of the same selected supermarkets published from week 2 to week 9 of 2020

¹² Distrifood. Market shares. 2019

These guidelines permit advertising for unhealthy supermarket products that are aimed at children; there are products in various categories that do not comply with the criteria in the Advertising Code for Food Products even though they are not compatible with the Wheel of Five.¹³ **To truly protect children and adolescents up to the age of 18, there should be no form of child-directed marketing whatsoever on products excluded from the Wheel of Five.**¹⁴ This means not just a restriction on children's idols but a restriction on all forms of child-directed marketing on packaging or other materials in physical and online stores. This limitation must not be based on the nutritional criteria included in the code but on those of the Wheel of Five.

RECOMMENDATION for sector organizations of supermarkets and manufacturers (CBL / FNLI)

Tighten up current guidelines for child-directed marketing together with the Dutch Advertising Code Committee, because children and adolescents are still too widely exposed to marketing for unhealthy food. Do not make an exception for point-of-sale materials or packaging in the Advertising Code for Food Products and use the criteria of the Wheel of Five as a basis instead of the criteria in the code. Do not use cartoon characters or other elements that appeal to children and include this ban in the Code for Child-directed Marketing. Increase the age of the target group for which marketing may be used to 18 years.

And finally, also take into consideration the interests of parents. Advertisements that include words such as 'kids' and 'baby' should only be used to promote products that are compatible with a healthy eating pattern for children.

2.2. How healthy are children's products?

We studied the composition of children's products in supermarkets based on the Wheel of Five guidelines set by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. These guidelines have been drawn up to help children and adults choose products every day to create a healthy eating pattern that is made up of healthy foods (included in the Wheel of Five) with a few exceptions (excluded from the Wheel of Five) now and again. With regard to product groups excluded from the Wheel of Five, we examined to what degree these products are suitable for children as an exception. Outside the Wheel of Five, the Netherlands Nutrition Centre has identified two exceptions for adults and children aged 9 and over: small treats that are allowed three to five times a day (daily selection) and treats that are allowed no more than three times a week (weekly selection). For children under the age of 9, the advice is to give no products excluded from the Wheel of Five to those under 4 and a very limited number of products to those aged 4 to 8.

In particular, we look at sugar levels and the energy content of products due to their association with obesity in children (see box on page 11). The guideline of the World Health Organization is that added sugar may provide up to 10 per cent of the daily energy requirement.¹⁵ Based on the average energy needs of children aged 4 to 8 and children aged 9 to 12, this results in 35 grams and 51 grams per day respectively.

We have defined six categories of products found in all supermarkets, which are specifically aimed at children and which form part of a daily eating pattern. These are baby and toddler products, children's breakfast cereals, children's sandwich fillings, children's desserts, on-the-go biscuits and drinks cartons. In all these categories it is possible to meet the Wheel of Five criteria, with the exception of on-the-go biscuits, which are considered a snack. By definition, other categories containing children's products such as biscuits, sweets and ice cream, are not included in the Wheel of Five.

¹³ Netherlands Nutrition Centre as commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Criteria of the Advertising Code for Food Products compared with the Wheel of Five guidelines [Criteria RVV vergeleken met de richtlijnen Schijf van Vijf], 2017

¹⁴ WHO, UNICEF, Lancet Commission. A future for the world's children? 2020

¹⁵ WHO. Guideline: Sugar intake for adults and children. 2015

BABY AND TODDLER PRODUCTS

Many supermarkets place the items needed by parents of young children (0–4 years) together in their online store; these products range from infant formula to nappies and from baby shampoo to jars of baby food. For this selection of products, we looked at the 'baby food' category in the online stores of supermarkets (with the exception of infant milk for which there are guidelines based on legislation regarding its composition and promotion).

The criteria used to classify products in the Wheel of Five are no different for young children than for adults, but the consumption of products excluded from the Wheel of Five is discouraged for young children. According to the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, "The advice for children aged 0 to 4 is not to give them a weekly option and possibly give them a daily option as a sandwich filling but preferably not as a snack between meals".¹⁶ There are a large number of products in this category, but we have distinguished four subgroups in this section which we will use as a guide to show our findings.



Baby porridge

Baby porridge, including 'evening porridge', is assessed in accordance with the guidelines that the Nutrition Centre uses for breakfast cereals.

Of the 60 types of baby porridge examined, 48 do not meet these criteria which means that the majority are not compatible with the Wheel of Five.

Fruit purées

In the supermarkets studied, various types of fruit purées are sold in pouches, jars and plastic containers. There may be some uncertainty about the health benefits of fruit purées as the criteria are complex and the dividing lines are thin. The main component of fruit purées is puréed fruit. Little is yet known about the health effects of puréed fruit although there is a difference between eating and drinking fruit purée. Puréed fruit that is not sold as a drink and has no added sugar is included in the Wheel of Five. In general, composite products are only included in the Wheel of Five if all its components meet the criteria. ***Of the 170 fruit purées, 147 of them are excluded from the Wheel of Five.***

Baby food jars

The Wheel of Five guidelines for baby food sold in jars are complex. In addition to the criteria for energy, vegetables, meat, fish, egg or vegetarian product, nuts, legumes, potato, cereals, fats and salt, a meal may contain one daily selection but an unlimited amount of other foods that meet the criteria for the Wheel of Five. Except for energy and vegetables, the criteria always indicate maximum values. The minimum values are applicable for a complete meal. ***Fewer than one per cent of all jars contain a sufficient number of calories to be considered a complete meal.*** This means it is not possible to perform an analysis on the criteria for the minimum amount of vegetables. In order to assess the baby food jars, a random sample of 25 per cent of the jars was analysed, in which we only looked at the criteria with maximum values. Based on this sampling, we can conclude that ***at least 55 per cent of the products are not compatible with the Wheel of Five as they contain two or more daily selections.***

¹⁶ Netherlands Nutrition Centre. Growing up healthy 1–4 years [Gezond Groeien 1–4 jaar]. 2016

Simone Kukenheim, Alderman for Healthcare in Amsterdam:

"According to research conducted by the Municipal Health Service, parents blindly trust that the products available in the special baby and toddler section are good and healthy for their child. Parents give their child food from jars because they think this gives their child everything they need. Parents believe that manufacturers have thought about this. I therefore find it very alarming that this study now shows that only 30 per cent of the products in the section comply with the guidelines of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, the Wheel of Five. In doing so, supermarkets are betraying the confidence of parents who want the best for their child. I expect supermarkets to take action quickly in response to this, and assume that manufacturers will make their products healthier".

Snacks

Supermarkets sell a varied range of in between meals snacks specifically for young children, such as biscuits, wafers, snacks (such as crisps) and fruit purée with cake. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre always discourages snacks not compatible with the Wheel of Five for children under the age of 4, except for dried fruits such as raisins. The average sugar content of these products varies widely, from 7.5 grams per 100 grams for the baby wafers to 20 grams per 100 grams for the cake. Although one portion of cake does not weigh 100 grams, the amount of sugar per 100 grams is the equivalent of five sugar cubes, whereas the WHO states that children aged 1 to 4 must not be given more than the equivalent of six to seven sugar cubes per day.¹⁷ Children who are given these snacks soon reach the maximum recommended amount of added sugar for the whole day and can easily consume too many calories and too much sugar in a day.

Baby and toddler section

The product classification in the online environment is often reflected in the physical supermarket. For example, products that are similar are placed together to help us make a choice. Unlike the other children's products, the baby and toddler category often has its own separate category and section. This helps parents choose products for their children, but the above analysis reveals that a large number of these products are not compatible with a healthy diet for young children. ***Of the products in the range that are not regarded as treats (porridge, fruit purées and baby food jars), only a third of them meet the criteria for the Wheel of Five.*** The baby and toddler section also contains

a large number of snacks. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre advises against giving children under the age of 4 products that are not included in the Wheel of Five as snacks, as young children will soon reach their maximum daily limit of added sugar. The assessment of baby food jars for young children is complex. Manufacturers are, however, usually transparent about the composition of the meals, which makes it possible – in theory – for parents to assess those products in terms of health benefits. In addition, the portion sizes are not always in line with the recommendation of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, which makes it difficult to assess the products on the basis of the Wheel of Five criteria. A separate section in the store containing food products for young children only makes it easier for parents to select healthy products if all products in the section fit within a healthy eating pattern for this age category.

RECOMMENDATION for supermarkets

Make sure that the baby and toddler section meets the guidelines for a healthy eating pattern for this age category. Move products excluded from the Wheel of Five from the baby and toddler section to the section containing comparable alternatives, e.g. porridge products to the breakfast cereals and baby biscuits to the cakes and biscuits section. Then, the baby and toddler section will only contain products that are a healthy choice for young children and parents can make a considered choice in the other categories for products that are included or not included in the Wheel of Five.

¹⁷ WHO. Guideline: Sugar intake for adults and children. 2015

Of the 39 children's breakfast cereals examined, ONLY ONE product meets the Wheel of Five criteria.



CHILDREN'S BREAKFAST CEREALS

This category contains breakfast cereals that supermarkets place in the 'children's breakfast cereals' category in their online store: breakfast cereals containing the word 'kids' or 'children' in the name and breakfast cereals featuring typical kids' pictures such as frogs, bears or UFOs. According to the guidelines of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, breakfast cereals may be included in the Wheel of Five depending on a product's nutritional value. *Out of the 39 products we selected, only one product meets these criteria.*

Each of the other 38 products did not contain enough fibre or had too much sugar, salt or saturated fat to be included in the Wheel of Five.

Products not included in the Wheel of Five may possibly be regarded as daily or weekly selections. Based on a standard portion size of 30 grams, all products outside the Wheel of Five contain too many calories per portion to meet the energy criterion for a daily selection. If we only looked at sugar, eight products would meet the Wheel of Five criteria but these products have had salt added to them or do not contain enough fibre. The average sugar content of the children's breakfast cereals is no less than 6.78 grams per recommended portion size of 30 grams, which is equivalent to almost two sugar cubes.

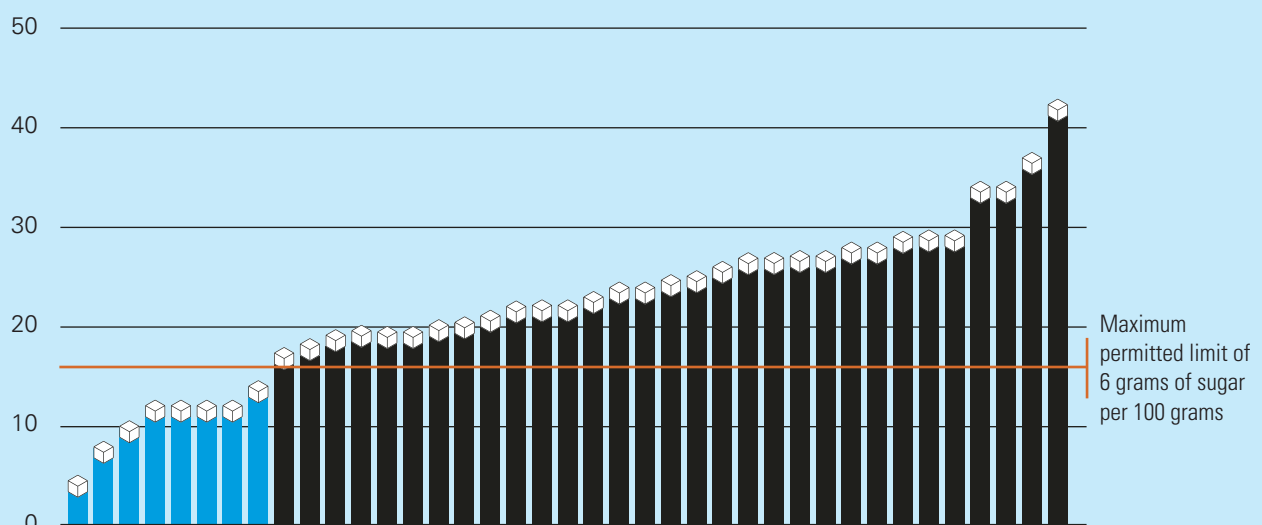
Of the 865 children's sandwich fillings examined, 829 products do NOT COMPLY with the Wheel of Five.



SANDWICH FILLINGS

This category includes both sweet and savoury fillings. Typical 'adult' flavours, such as chorizo, sambal or mature cheese and variants such as almond or pumpkin seed butter have not been considered. The selection includes liver

SUGAR IN CHILDREN'S BREAKFAST CEREALS sugar content in grams per 100 grams of the product



Each bar represents one product. The products shown in blue meet the criteria of the Wheel of Five for sugar.

sausage pâté (including the vegetarian version), luncheon meat, various cheese spreads, jams and fruit spreads, apple and pear butters, chocolate and fruit sprinkles and flakes, various spreads, peanut butters, crushed and whole aniseed sprinkles and coconut slices. **Of the total selection of 865 products, 829 are not compatible with the Wheel of Five.**

Most types of sandwich fillings are excluded from the Wheel of Five. However, there are products that meet the Wheel of Five criteria within the peanut butter and cheese categories only: **36 out of the 157 types of peanut butter and cheese met the criteria.** Also the cheese spreads that are specifically aimed at children – containing 'kids' in the name or Jumbo's Woezel & Pip version – are compatible with the Wheel of Five.

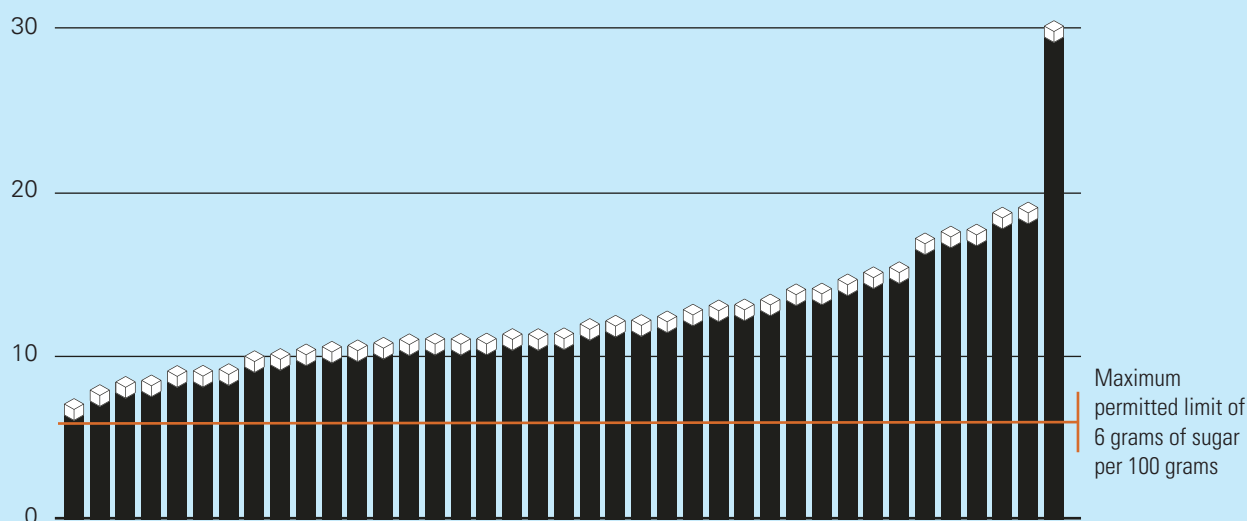
The products that are excluded from the Wheel of Five can still be divided into daily selections and weekly selections. **Of the sweet and savoury sandwich fillings that are excluded from the Wheel of Five, just over half of them meet the criteria for a daily selection.** Of the products that should be no more than a weekly selection, most of them contain too many calories to be eaten daily; these are mainly chocolate and hazelnut spreads and peanut butters, with the other weekly selections containing too much salt or saturated fat.

CHILDREN'S DESSERTS

For this section, we looked at desserts that have been placed by one or more supermarkets in the 'children's desserts' category of their online stores. **Based on the guidelines of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, none of the 40 desserts complied with the criteria of the Wheel of Five.** An important criterion in this regard is sugar. The diagram below shows that none of the children's desserts meets the maximum permitted limit of 6 grams of sugar per 100 grams of product. The portion size of the children's desserts varies between 50 grams and 200 grams. This means that some of the desserts may have less than 6 grams of sugar per portion in a package as smaller portion sizes mean a lower sugar intake. However, these products are still not included in the Wheel of Five as they still contain too much sugar per 100 grams of the product.



SUGAR IN CHILDREN'S DESSERTS sugar content in grams per 100 grams of the product



Each bar represents one product. None of the products meet the criteria of the Wheel of Five for sugar.

CHILDREN'S DRINKS

For this category, all drink cartons – fruit drinks (excluding pure juices), multivitamin drinks, yoghurt drinks, chocolate milk – and bottles containing typical children's drinks, such as kids cola, were examined. The maximum pack size was 200 millilitres. Small tins and packs that are more aimed at adults such as cola, orangeade and tonic, were excluded. For the children's dairy drinks, both the dairy and dairy-free versions were included in the study.

The Wheel of Five guidelines use different criteria for water, fruit drinks and dairy drinks. Water, with a possible flavour and with no added sugar, is included in the Wheel of Five; dairy drinks may be included in the Wheel of Five, but fruit juices are never included. Outside the Wheel of Five, there are criteria for being considered a daily or a weekly selection.

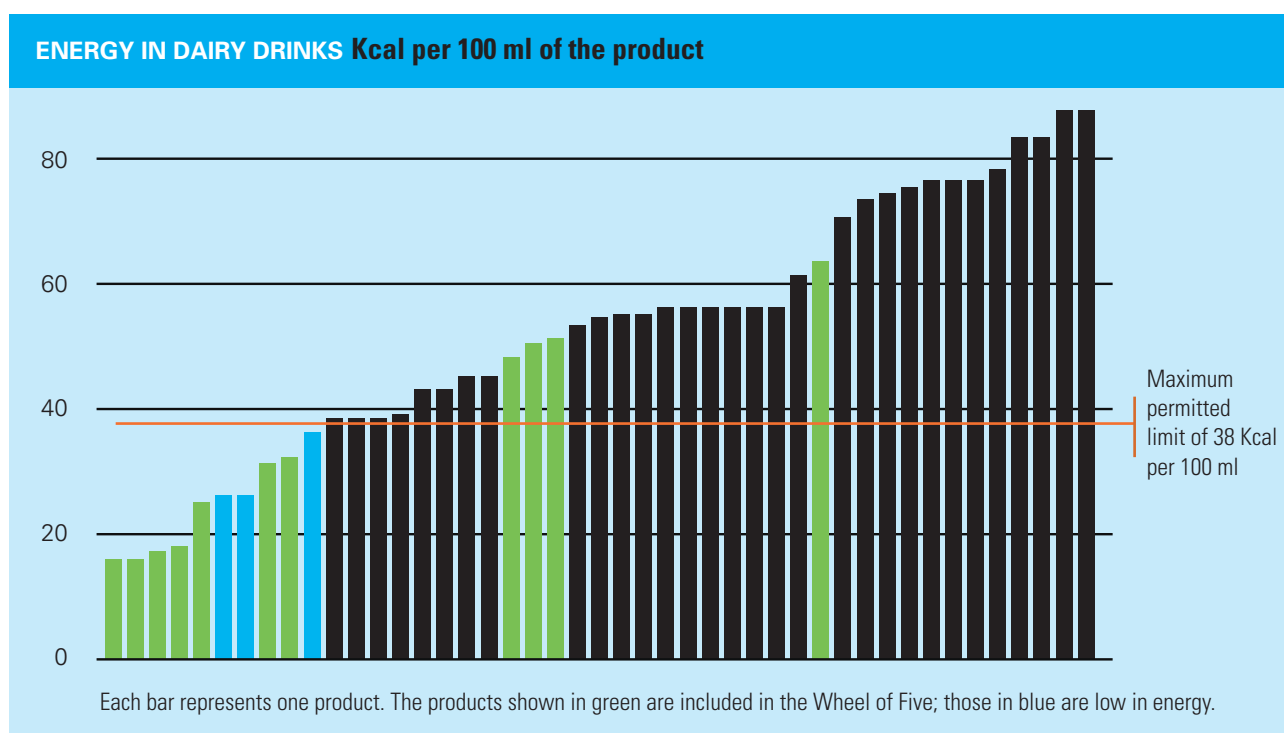
In all, 137 of the 148 products did not meet the criteria of the Wheel of Five. Of the products included in the study, 16 can be regarded as a daily selection, and the remaining 82 per cent as a weekly selection. The figures below show the energy values per 100 ml for children's waters, fruit juices and dairy drinks. Energy content is one of the criteria used for classification as a daily selection. The limit for fruit juices is 4 kcal per 100 grams and the product range varies from 0 to 40 kcal per 100 ml.

The limit for dairy drinks is 75 kcal per portion and around two thirds of the product range exceeds this limit.

A number of dairy drinks with a high energy content are nevertheless included in the Wheel of Five as there is no criterion for the total energy content of dairy drinks. There is a criterion, however, for the daily selection. The difference between the dairy drinks included in and not included in the Wheel of Five becomes clearer when we look at the sugar content. While it is sugar that mainly produces the high energy content in fruit juices, the energy in dairy drinks can also come from fats and proteins. This means that a product may contain little sugar but still contain a lot of energy. On average, children's drinks contain 5 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres, which is equivalent to 1.25 sugar cubes per 100 grams. The average pack size is 197 ml: a child that takes a carton of drink to school every day consumes almost 2.5 sugar cubes on average. In this way, a child can soon consume an excessive amount of added sugar.

ON-THE-GO BISCUITS

On-the-go biscuits are bars and biscuits that are packaged individually and which children can easily take with them as a snack, such as to school. The selection includes fruit, muesli and nut bars, as well as gingerbread slices, and fruit

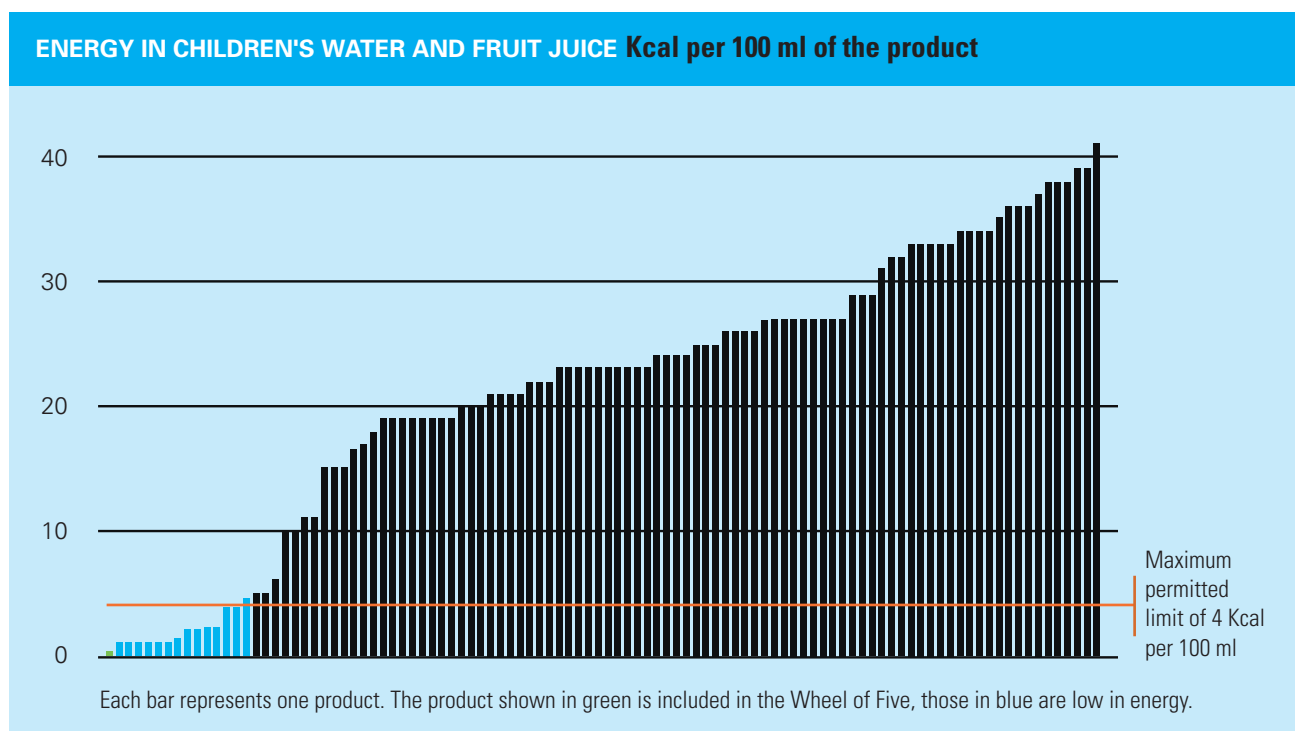


and milk biscuits. More adult flavours, such as pure chocolate and healthy bars or sports bars, have been excluded. Biscuits are regarded by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre as a snack and are therefore excluded from the Wheel of Five regardless of their nutritional values.

We can, however, make a distinction between daily selections and weekly selections based on the energy content of the bars and biscuits. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre assumes that a slice of gingerbread or a muesli bar weighs 25 grams. In reality, the weight of on-the-go packs varies from 12.5 grams to 75 grams. Given that one pack will usually be eaten as a single portion, the pack size was taken as the portion size in this analysis. The energy content of these 354 products varies considerably, from 39 to 456 calories per portion. High and low energy values can be found across the entire range of pack sizes but the daily selection products all turned out to be smaller portions.

Of the total range of on-the-go biscuits for children, 5 per cent meet the criteria for a daily selection product, with the other 95 per cent no more than a weekly selection at best.

Many of the pack sizes do not follow the recommendation of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre which assumes a size of 25 grams. However, it is not enough just to change the pack size to make the products healthy as a large number of them will still contain too many calories per portion.



OVERVIEW children's products examined in accordance with the Wheel of Five criteria

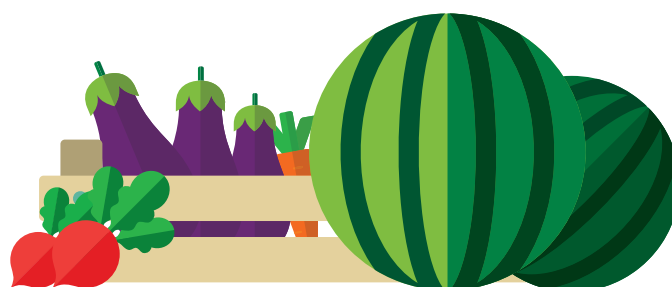
Product category	What % could comply	What % complies	What % DOES NOT comply
B&T* porridge	100%	20%	80%
B&T fruit purées	100%	13.5%	86.5%
B&T baby food jars	100%	55%	45%
Total B&T	100%	31.3%	68.7%
Children's breakfast cereals	100%	2.6%	97.4%
Sandwich fillings	18.2%	4.2%	95.8%
Children's desserts	100%	0%	100%
Children's drinks	31.8%	7.5%	92.5%
On-the-go biscuits	0%	–	100%
Total children's products	40.2%	10.5%	89.5%

*B&T are baby and toddler products

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that many children's products in the supermarket do not meet the Wheel of Five criteria. Indeed, in some categories, such as children's breakfast cereals, they are less healthy than products aimed at adults. Although there is a difference in range between supermarket formulas, *almost 75 per cent of the 800 or so children's products examined do not meet the Wheel of Five criteria while some alternatives do.*

In the categories that are excluded from the Wheel of Five by definition, such as on-the-go biscuits, children's drinks and some sandwich fillings, the majority of products are not suitable as an everyday snack and therefore fall under the weekly selections. In addition, there is a lot of variation in portion sizes which are not always in line with the recommendations of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. As a result, parents and children will often choose products outside the Wheel of Five and it is difficult to achieve a healthy eating pattern.



RECOMMENDATION for supermarkets and manufacturers

Expand the range of children's products in the Wheel of Five. Make product improvements to ensure that more products meet the Wheel of Five criteria or that products excluded from the Wheel of Five become a daily selection instead of a weekly selection.

2.3 How are these products promoted to children and parents?

In addition to the availability of healthy and unhealthy products, promotion also plays an important part. For this reason, the study additionally looked at the extent to which special offers for these children's products focus on healthy or unhealthy versions and what form of child-directed marketing is used.¹⁸

All major supermarkets have special offers on children's products on a regular basis. It is worth noting that sandwich fillings, on-the-go biscuits and drink cartons in particular are almost always on special offer somewhere. In the special offer leaflets, the Wheel of Five products within these categories are not highlighted. There does not seem to be any particular hesitation by supermarkets in offering special deals on unhealthy products for children and, at the same time, there is little promotion for the better choices.

Price promotion is not the only way to make products an interesting option for children. Another method is to use child-directed marketing, such as using games, actions and prize contests to make these products extra appealing to children. For this study, we confined ourselves to the use of marketing on the packaging itself; what features are displayed on the packaging that specifically appeals to, or are aimed at children? According to the Advertising Code, a recommendation on the packaging constitutes advertising. Furthermore, not only is the text a matter of concern, but also aspects such as layout and colour. We specifically looked at the use of cartoon characters (licensed or developed in-house), other pictures and drawings, text (games, riddles, jokes), special product shapes and words such as 'kids', 'baby', 'child' or similar terms. The baby and toddler range was not included in this analysis as the entire category is automatically rated as marketing aimed at children and parents through the use of the terms 'baby' and 'kids' and the age indications.

Around 25 percent of the total number of products in the study featured child-directed marketing on the packaging. There is a signifi-

cant difference in the amount of child-directed marketing used per category. This seems to depend on the big-name brands in a category and the number of own-brand versions. A lot of child-directed marketing is still used for children's breakfast cereals (79 per cent), children's desserts (78 per cent) and soft drinks (77 per cent) in particular. On children's breakfast cereals and desserts, we often see a character or cartoon figure designed by the advertiser or fun drawings combined with an attractive font. In the sandwich fillings and on-the-go biscuits categories, where products may be slightly less specifically aimed at children, we see far less use of child-directed marketing. The sandwich fillings, on-the-go bars and drinks mainly feature fun drawings combined with attractive fonts. The sector agreement to refrain from using children's idols on unhealthy own-brand products has been widely implemented. Many of the supermarket own brands are more restrained when it comes to using child-directed marketing too explicitly. No cartoon characters and only a limited number of other children's pictures could be found on unhealthy own-brand products. However, these products are often positioned next to big-name brands that still display marketing aimed at children on the packaging. ***In order to truly protect children and adolescents up to the age of 18, all child-directed marketing should be banned from products that are not included in the Wheel of Five.***

Child-directed marketing is specifically used by three supermarkets to advertise Wheel of Five own-brand products to children:

- Jumbo with Woezel & Pip
- Lidl via Frank & Jan
- Aldi in collaboration with Disney.

RECOMMENDATION for supermarkets and manufacturers

Go further than the Advertising Code and only use marketing for children's products that are included in the Wheel of Five.

¹⁸ This part of the study involved looking at photos of products that could be found in the online stores (from November 2019 until March 2020) of the supermarkets Albert Heijn, Plus, Jumbo, Deen, Coop, Dirk, Jan Linders and Ekoplaza and the packaging in the regular product range of the largest branch of Lidl. All the special offers in the PDF versions of the leaflets from the same selection of supermarkets were included (weeks 2 to 9 of 2020).

2.4 What role do children's rights and children's health play in the CSR policy of Dutch supermarkets?

UNICEF has identified nine ways in which supermarkets can contribute to children's health (see Section 4 on page 30 for more background information). To what extent do these basic principles play a part in the CSR policy of the different supermarkets? For each of these nine points, we paint a general picture of the sector and do not discuss the policies of individual supermarket chains in detail unless a good example is given of how to implement a basic principle.

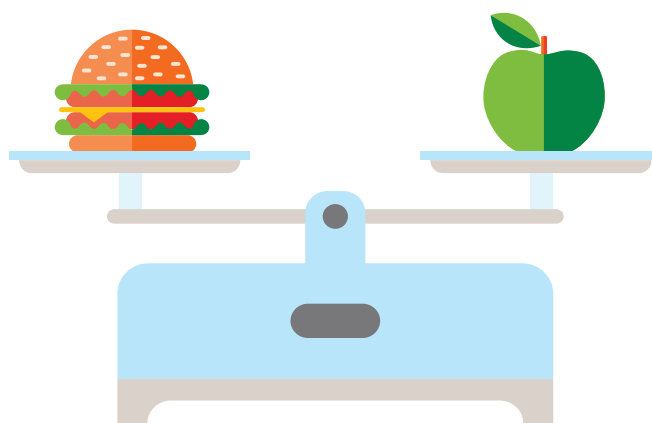
1. By **making improvements to products**, the sugar, salt and fat contents of children's products can be reduced to make them healthier. Changes in portion size can also contribute to this reduction.

In 2014, all the supermarket chains – represented by the Dutch Food Retail Association (CBL) – the food manufacturers – represented by the Dutch Food Industry Federation (FNLI) – and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport signed the National Agreement to Improve Product Composition (AVP) which sets out agreements for making products in supermarkets healthier by reducing the amounts of salt, saturated fat and calories (sugar and fat). In 2018, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) concluded that the current agreements in the AVP led to small steps being taken to lower daily salt and sugar intake. The agreements that were added in mid 2017 are estimated to have had little extra impact on the daily intake of salt and sugar. Additional and/or stricter agreements are needed for new and existing product groups, where the limits for reduction or further reduction have not yet been reached, in order to achieve a greater effect on public health.¹⁹ The AVP runs until 2020; it has been agreed this year that in consultation with relevant stakeholders, a new national system for product improvement will follow on from the AVP, as one of the measures against obesity in the National Prevention Agreement. One of the aims of the new system is to create a healthier range of food products in the supermarket. Almost all supermarkets spe-

cifically mention product improvement in their policy, but do not mention specific objectives for the composition of children's products.

2. The products and/or shelves display **clear and understandable** information on each child product. This includes information on the ingredients – including, for example, one name for sugar – as well as the product's nutritional value.

Approximately half of the supermarkets focus in their CSR policy is on making it easier for consumers to make choices by providing extra information in the store. Albert Heijn, Plus and Coop Supermarkten already placed a sugar, fibre or calorie guide on the shelf: this displays, for instance, the sugar content of products in certain product categories, such as dairy, breakfast cereals, bread and drinks. In addition, the nutritional value is stated in the product information on the packaging. A clear food choice logo on the front of the packaging can provide a quick indication of how healthy a product is. Several supermarkets have said that they will start using the Nutri-Score logo. What is worth noting is that none of the supermarkets have taken the perspective of children or adolescents into account. The question of whether they too can understand the information on the packaging does not appear to play a role, while the whole point is that they learn to make better choices for their health. A food choice logo or indicator that clearly shows how much sugar, salt, calories or fibre a product contains could help them.



¹⁹ RIVM. Estimated effect of lower salt and sugar content in food products on the daily salt and sugar intakes in the Netherlands [Geschat effect van lagere zout- en suikergehalten in voedingsmiddelen op de dagelijkse zout- en suikerinname in Nederland]. RIVM reporting letter 2019-0231.

Nutri-Score

From mid 2021, Dutch manufacturers will be allowed to display the Nutri-Score logo on their packaging. This is a food choice logo developed in France that uses traffic light colours and letters to provide insight into how healthy a product is. If manufacturers wish to use this logo, the score must be displayed on their entire range. The logo will be introduced in 2021 as it is still being evaluated by an independent committee of scientists. They are examining how it could be better aligned with the Wheel of Five – the dietary guidelines of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre that are commonly used in the Netherlands.

3. The **minimum age** for buying **energy drinks** is 18. This is similar to the approach taken for tobacco and alcohol.

Both Aldi and Lidl have set a minimum age of 14 for the sale of energy drinks. Albert Heijn, Plus and Coop Supermarkten have removed larger packs from their range in order to limit consumption of these drinks. The Plus chain is a fervent advocate of an age limit and is urgently calling for politicians to create uniform conditions via guidelines or legislation. Now that the first steps have been taken by Aldi and Lidl, we would like to see more supermarkets follow this example and for the minimum age to be set at 18 years.

4. The **store layout** is in line with the Wheel of Five and with the difference in daily and weekly selections. Children's products that meet the Wheel of Five criteria are placed in various locations in the store, for instance to stimulate sales. Daily and weekly selections are less prominent. The **shelves are arranged so** that the Wheel of Five products are easiest to choose.

If we specifically look at children's products, there are various possibilities to help children, adolescents and their parents choose healthy

products. As explained in Section 2.2, there are still plenty of products in the baby and toddler section that do not meet the criteria of the Wheel of Five. It would be easier for parents to choose healthy products if this section only contained products from the Wheel of Five. None of the supermarkets have specific objectives for this section. There is no policy either for highlighting the healthy options in other categories containing children's products, nor is any mention made that children's products excluded from the Wheel of Five should not be placed near tills or in other promotional spots.

5. The children's products included in the Wheel of Five are not higher in **price** than their healthier alternatives in the same product category.

Many supermarkets have stated in their CSR policy that they want to encourage consumers to buy healthy options. It has also been agreed in the National Prevention Agreement that Wheel of Five products will be promoted in the stores, although it is not yet clear how this will be done. No supermarket makes any further mention about the price differences between the products in the Wheel of Five and the daily and weekly selections.

6. The **special offers** mainly promote the Wheel of Five options.

Research conducted by Questionmark shows that special offers in supermarkets mainly focus on promoting unhealthy products.²⁰ The analysis in Section 2.3 shows that although some categories of children's products are on special offer less frequently, no hesitation is shown by supermarkets in promoting unhealthy products for children via special offers. We see no specific plans in the CSR policy of the supermarkets to limit special offers on unhealthy products for children.

²⁰ Questionmark. *Superlijst*. Supermarket list. Who makes it easier to choose sustainable and healthy products? [Wie maakt duurzaam & gezond de makkelijke keuze?] 2019

7. **Marketing campaigns** are only used to encourage consumers to choose products from the Wheel of Five.

In 2016 CBL, the sector organization for supermarkets, announced that supermarkets would no longer feature children's idols on unhealthy own-brand products. The Plus chain does not feature children's idols or any other child-attractive figures or fonts on their own brand and says that it does not place big-name brands that market specifically to children at eye level. Jumbo, Lidl and Aldi go even further, using children's idols to promote the consumption of healthy products.

8. The **consumption** of Wheel of Five products is promoted in the store. Only healthy products are offered to children free of charge, and magazines and recipe cards focus on healthy food for children. This includes tips for healthy breakfasts, snacks, lunches and treats as well as affordable, delicious and healthy evening meals.

This point is given the most consideration in the CSR policy of the supermarkets. Albert Heijn, Jumbo and Lidl explicitly mention that fruit is offered to children free of charge in their stores to encourage children to eat it. In addition, almost all supermarkets focus on healthy food for children in magazines, recipes or in the stores, for example with collectable campaigns such as Jumbo's vegetable bingo and Plus supermarket's *Kruiden Sjeffies* herb kits, or fun in-store treasure hunts to teach children about healthy eating and cooking. In addition, Jumbo works with the King's Games (Koningsspelen) to organize a King's Breakfast that aims to make parents and children aware of the importance of a healthy breakfast. In conjunction with the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, Albert Heijn offers the 'I eat better' (*'Ik eet het beter'*) teaching programme in primary schools.

9. Every supermarket organization has the clear **goal** of contributing to children's health and is **transparent** about its results and progress.

Half of the supermarkets mention children's health in their CSR policy, while others either do not or refer to all their customers in more general terms. The supermarkets that report on children and health appear to be transparent about their results and mention them in their reports. Albert Heijn, Jumbo, Lidl and Aldi are in collaboration with the Dutch Kids Council who advise them on policy and practice. Most of the activities that are mentioned within the context of a healthy diet for children focus on education.

What is a Kids Council?

A Kids Council allows children to help companies and organizations think about strategic and social issues on a structural basis. In this way, children become involved in the world around them and decision-makers are inspired by children's creative brainpower which, in turn, leads to new ways of thinking.
See www.raadvankinderen.nl.

RECOMMENDATION for supermarkets

Make sure that healthy food for children, which is a child's right for a reason, is prioritized in the CSR policy and core activities – product range, store layout, and pricing and promotion policy – of supermarkets.

Sanne Bogaarts, CSR Manager for Lidl Nederland:

"As the best supermarket for fruit and vegetables, we think it is important to focus attention on a healthy diet. Our VitaMinis collectables campaign (soft toys that look like fruit and vegetables) was a fun and informative way to highlight the importance of a healthy diet by showing just how easy and delicious it can be. Of course, we don't do this on our own. Our suppliers also play a major role through their commitment to supplying us with high-quality fruits and vegetables every day. After the success of the VitaMinis in 2018, there was a follow-up campaign in 2019 in the form of a sticker book and new soft toy characters.'

Nadie Winde, Corporate Responsibility Manager for Aldi Nederland:

"It is important for children to kick off the day with a good breakfast as it ensures they get off to a good start. At Aldi, we think it is important to make everyone – especially parents with young children – aware of the importance of a healthy diet. Together with the organizers of the National School Breakfast, we have a joint mission to ensure that all children in the Netherlands can have a healthy breakfast. Through structured cooperation, our ultimate aim is to ensure that all children in the Netherlands eat a healthy breakfast every day. We have everything in store to create a healthy breakfast and there has been increasing development over the past few years in the areas of health and variety, such as more wholemeal products containing less salt and more fibre. In addition, a wholemeal raisin bun has been developed, especially for the National School Breakfast, which is available in our stores fresh each day.'

Yvonne van Asselt, CSR Manager of Coop Supermarkten:

"We encourage our customers in various ways to make healthier and more conscious choices. It's never too early to start. We organize food safaris in our supermarkets for children and their parents. In this way, we find out what they consider to be important and this helps us, for instance, to improve our communication with this target group".



3. Recommendations

UNICEF the Netherlands aims to ensure that healthy food is available for all children. To what extent do supermarkets contribute to the health of children and adolescents?

Various initiatives have been set up. For instance, we have noticed that considerably less child-directed marketing is used for own-brand products than for big-name brands. At various supermarkets, child-directed marketing is specifically used to promote own-brand products that meet the Wheel of Five criteria to children. Several supermarkets organize activities in their stores or set up programmes to teach children about healthy eating, and to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables among children. Supermarkets also ask children for advice on child-

related issues and take part in scientific research to promote healthy and sustainable choices.

UNICEF hopes that this report will encourage all supermarkets to take further steps. It emerges from this study that despite the positive initiatives, good nutrition for children is still not given sufficient priority in policies and in day-to-day practice. By implementing the recommendations below, we can join forces to ensure that the food environment for children is made increasingly healthier.

RECOMMENDATIONS for supermarkets

What can supermarkets do?

- Make sure that healthy food for children, which is a child's right for a reason, is prioritized in the CSR policy and core activities – product range, store layout, and pricing and promotion policy – of supermarkets.
- Make sure that the baby and toddler section complies with the Guidelines for a Healthy Diet for this age category. Move products excluded from the Wheel of Five from the baby section to the section containing comparable alternatives, such as the porridge to the breakfast cereals and the baby biscuits to the cakes and biscuits section. Once this is done, the baby section will only contain healthy options for young children. A well-considered choice can then be made in the other product categories for products that are included or not included in the Wheel of Five – if this is also made more transparent.
- Set clear goals for a healthy range for children and make improvements to own-brand children's products, so that more products meet the Wheel of Five criteria. Children's products excluded from the Wheel of Five must score at least the same if not better than the category average in terms of nutritional value. Urge manufacturers to do the same.
- Make sure that the portion size of own-brand products is in line with the recommendations for children's portions.
- Go further than the Advertising Code and only use marketing for children's products that are included in the Wheel of Five, and urge manufacturers to do the same.

Prof. Dr. Ir. Jaap Seidell, Professor in Food and Health at the VU Amsterdam explains:

"Many of the products available in the supermarkets for babies and toddlers contain too much sugar. Supplementary baby food that is given in addition to breast milk should not be advertised as suitable for infants under six months, but this is still often the case. Teaching children unhealthy eating habits in the first years of their life can be detrimental to their growth and development in the long term".

RECOMMENDATIONS for manufacturers

What can manufacturers do?

- Expand the range of children's products included in the Wheel of Five and make improvements to products to ensure that weekly selections excluded from the Wheel of Five are healthy enough to become daily selections. Make sure that the portion size is in line with the recommendations for children's portions.
- Go further than the Advertising Code and only use marketing for children's products that are included in the Wheel of Five.

RECOMMENDATIONS for the sector organization for supermarkets

What can the sector organization for supermarkets do?

- Tighten up current guidelines for child-directed marketing together with the Dutch Advertising Code Committee and the FNLI, the sector organization for manufacturers, as children and adolescents are still too widely exposed to marketing. Do not make an exception for point-of-sale or packaging in the Advertising Code for Food Products and use the Wheel of Five as a basis instead of the code's own criteria. Also include non-licensed cartoon characters and other elements that appeal to children in the Code for Child-directed Marketing and increase the age to 18. In addition, develop guidelines for parent-directed marketing as it should not become a substitute for marketing aimed at children. Marketing should also solely be used for products that are compatible with a healthy eating pattern for children.
- Set the minimum age for purchasing energy drinks to 18 for the entire sector so it is similar to the rules for alcohol and tobacco.

RECOMMENDATIONS for the government

What can the government do?

- Make the nutritional needs of children a priority in the new product improvement agreement.
- Pay specific attention to children's products when developing the Nutri-Score. Make sure that the logo is used in such a way that it encourages children to follow a healthy eating pattern.
- Explore the options for a sugar tax as one of the recommendations put forward by the WHO Committee to end excess weight in children.¹⁵ This pricing measure has already been introduced in several countries.
- Work together with supermarkets to specify how children (or their parents) and adolescents can be more enticed to purchase products that are included in the Wheel of Five as indicated in the National Prevention Agreement.

Hanneke Dessing, Managing Director of the Dutch Diabetes Research Foundation:

"Studies conducted in countries that have a sugar tax have shown that this measure works. A sugar tax on high-sugar drinks results in manufacturers removing sugar from their products. It is therefore an effective way of reducing the consumption of high-sugar drinks and, consequently, the risk of type 2 diabetes. The Dutch Diabetes Research Foundation welcomes the recommendation in the report to further explore the possibilities for a sugar tax as part of a set of measures to reduce sugar consumption in the Netherlands".

4. What does a supermarket that respects children's rights look like?

To provide supermarkets with insight into the positive and negative impact they can have on children, UNICEF the Netherlands has developed a vision on how children's rights could be better respected in supermarkets. In this vision, we describe, among other things, how the supermarket environment itself could be set up differently.

Supermarkets have an impact on children's lives in a variety of ways.

Via the purchasing process

A large store has more than 30,000 products in its range, often from all over the world. Many children are employed in this extensive supply chain. For example, 108 million children work in the agricultural sector alone, often under appalling conditions.²¹ This means that supermarkets could exert an influence on these employment conditions and consequently on the health and welfare of children and of working parents or guardians. The same applies to their influence on wages, working hours and workload for young employees.

Via their role as employer

This not only applies in supplier countries but also in the Netherlands where supermarkets are one of the main sectors of employment. As an employer, they are responsible both for their young shelf-stackers as well as the employees who are parents or guardians themselves. After all, a family-friendly workplace looks after the well-being of both employees and their families.

Via store layouts

The supermarket is first and foremost a point-of-sale for consumer products. The food and drink industry is keen to maximize its sales and therefore influences our food environment through its product mix, marketing, labelling, availability and pricing. As a result, adults and children are enticed into making purchases, sometimes on impulse. Research has shown that approximately three-quarters of the food that lies on our plates each day has been bought in a supermarket, and many of these purchase decisions were not planned.²² Together with food producers, supermarkets can make a significant contribution to meeting children's need for healthy food.

Via their role in society

Supermarkets form an indispensable element in our society, partly owing to their huge supply chain, large logistics network and their many stores, distribution centres and offices. Due to their impact on the environment, access to natural resources and land use, these core activities also have a major impact on children's lives and futures. The supermarket sector can actively protect the interests of children by setting up and supporting social investment programmes in communities, both local and international.

²¹ ILO. Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends 2012–2016. Geneva, 2017.

²² Statistics Netherlands. Food for thought, Dietary and health trends [*Smakelijk weten, Trends in voeding en gezondheid*]. 2012

What does a supermarket that respects children's rights look like?

A supermarket that respects children's rights implements these rights in its store policy and practices. The supermarket's principles are then in line with the overarching principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based on the Child Rights and Business Principles²³, this is a supermarket in which the opinions, needs, priorities and rights of children and adolescents (0–18 years) form an integral part of its policy, activities and decisions.



A supermarket that respects children's rights is a supermarket that:

contributes to **banning child labour**, in all business activities and in all business relationships

provides **respectable work** for young employees, parents and guardians

ensures the **protection and safety** of children in all business activities and facilities

reinforces the efforts of the community and government to **do justice to children**

uses marketing and advertising that respect the rights of children and **protect them**

respects the rights of children with regard to the environment, the acquisition of land and its use.

ensures that products and services are **safe**

²³ UNICEF, UN Global Compact, Save the Children. Children's Rights and Business Principles. 2012

Basic principles for a healthy supermarket for children

Although the entire product range in a supermarket has an influence on children's eating patterns, we confine ourselves to these basic principles regarding children's products.

By this, we mean food products that mention the age for consumption (under 18) on the

packaging and all other products specifically aimed at, or intended for, children. In an ideal supermarket, the entire store complies with the nine basic principles below, which have been drawn up in consultation with various stakeholders.

- 01 By **making improvements to products**, the sugar, salt and fat content of children's products can be reduced to make them healthier. Changes to portion sizes can also contribute to this reduction.
- 02 The products and/or shelves display **clear and comprehensible** information on each children's product. This includes information on the ingredients – for example, one name for types of sugar – as well as the product's nutritional value.
- 03 The **minimum age** for buying **energy drinks** is 18. This is similar to the approach taken for tobacco and alcohol.
- 04 The **store layout** is in line with the Wheel of Five and with the difference in daily and weekly selections. Children's products that meet the Wheel of Five criteria are placed in various locations in the store, for instance to stimulate sales. Daily and weekly selections are less prominent. The **shelves are arranged** so that the Wheel of Five products are always easiest to choose.
- 05 In a product category, the children's products included in the Wheel of Five are not higher in **price** than their unhealthier alternatives.
- 06 The **special offers** mainly promote the Wheel of Five options.
- 07 **Marketing campaigns** are only used to encourage consumers to choose products from the Wheel of Five.
- 08 The **consumption** of Wheel of Five products is promoted in the store. Only these products are offered to children free of charge, and magazines and recipe cards focus on healthy food for children. This includes tips for healthy breakfasts, snacks, lunches and treats as well as affordable, delicious and healthy evening meals.
- 09 Every supermarket organization has the clear **goal** of contributing to children's health and is **transparent** about its results and progress.



Prof. Koen Joosten, paediatrician intensive care specialist at IC Erasmus MC Sophia:

"Children are growing and developing rapidly. They have the right to do so in a healthy manner. A healthy diet that complies with the Wheel of Five and which is age appropriate is an important aspect of this. At present, the range of food products for children is dominated by the range for adults, which includes many products containing too much sugar and salt. For example, soft drinks contain no healthy nutrients, but do contain large amounts of sugar, which leads to an increased risk of obesity and tooth decay at a young age and type 2 diabetes in later life. Everyone in the chain of care for growing children must take responsibility for reversing the increasingly unhealthy eating behaviour of children, from supermarket buyers to GPs at the surgery".

5. About UNICEF

UNICEF – for every child

UNICEF the Netherlands is one of the 34 national committees that represent UNICEF in high income countries. We raise funds for aid programmes that are carried out in 155 low and middle income countries and provide information on the work that UNICEF does. In addition, our committee monitors whether the Dutch government adheres to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both in its domestic and foreign policies.

Our committee also collaborates with Dutch companies to help them comply with international guidelines, such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to do business with due consideration for children's rights. UNICEF the Netherlands pays special attention to child refugees and children that receive poor nutrition or whose mental resilience is at stake.

Children's rights and businesses

Children under the age of 18 represent almost a third of the world's population, which makes it inevitable that companies will have a direct or indirect impact on children's lives. Children are direct consumers, young and future employees, as well as children of working parents. At the same time, children form an important part of society and the environment in which a business operates. Childhood is a special time of rapid physical and psychological development. The way that businesses interact with

children and adolescents can have a long-lasting and even irreversible impact on their physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. In 2012, UNICEF, Save the Children and the United Nations Global Compact joined forces to develop the Children's Rights and Business Principles.

These principles form a directive for companies in all activities that are undertaken in the workplace, in the sale of their products and in society, to prevent children from coming to harm and to actively protect children's interests. By respecting children's rights and incorporating them into policy and practice, businesses can act in a socially responsible manner while at the same time developing innovations and creating new markets. By protecting children, you can help build a strong, well-educated society, which is essential for a stable, inclusive and sustainable business environment.



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IMPRINT

Research: Questionmark Foundation

Analyses & Conclusions: UNICEF the Netherlands and Questionmark Foundation

Text: UNICEF the Netherlands

Editing: Bureau1, Vincent Weggemans

Design & Illustrations: Marieke Bokelman – www.los.be

Translation: DUO VERTAALBURO BV