



Dairy Council for Northern Ireland Conference

“Nutrition & Health: What’s New?”

Belfast, 3 May 2013

**Nutrition information and communication:
key challenges**

Wim Verbeke

Ghent University

Department of Agricultural Economics, Belgium

wim.verbeke@UGent.be

Overview

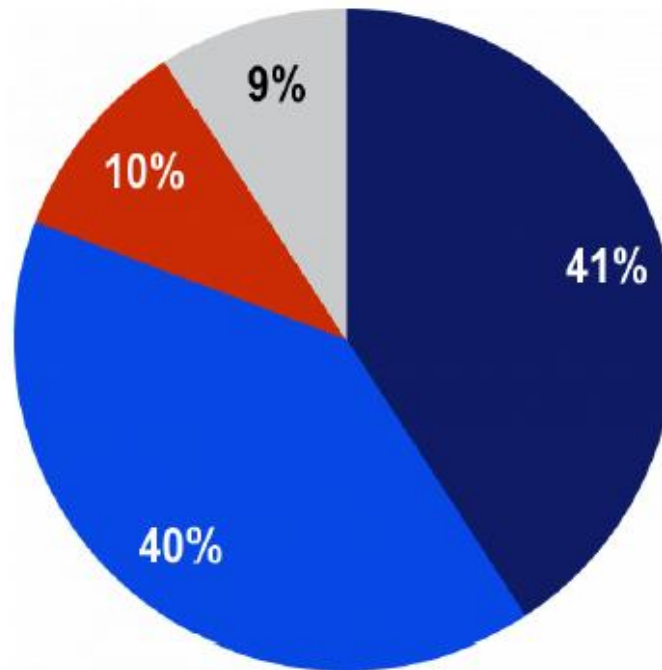
1. Consumer interest in nutrition information
2. Nutrition information on food labels
3. Interventions to stimulate healthy eating
4. Credibility and use of information sources
5. “Nutritious by nature” as a relevant asset
6. Conclusions

1.

**Food-related communication and
Consumer interest in nutrition information**

News on food that may be bad for health

QF9b. Please tell me when was the last time you read in the press, saw on the Internet or television or heard on the radio, that a certain type of food may be bad for your health for example containing too much fat or salt.

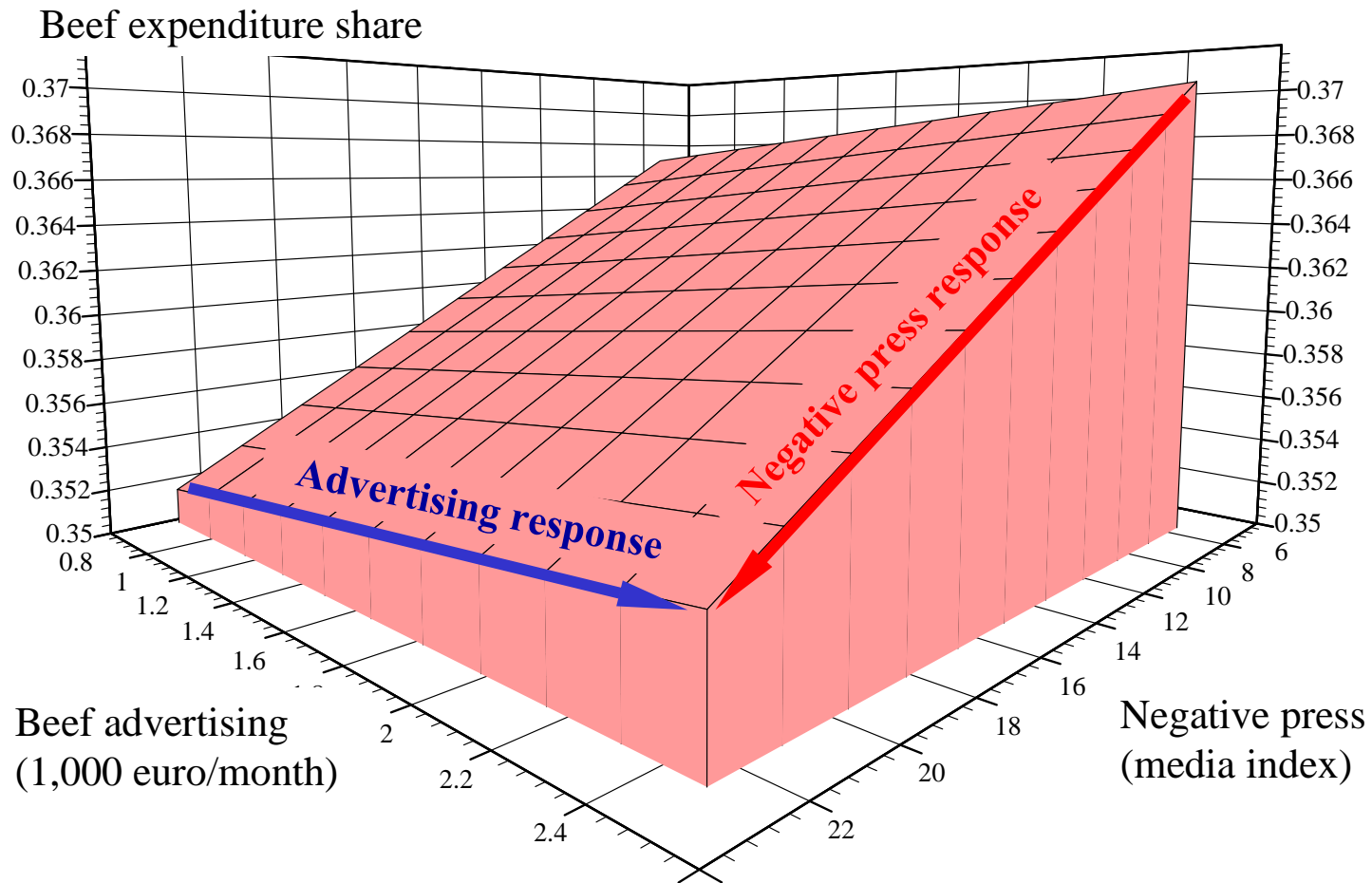


**Mass media:
Plenty of negative
food-related
communication**

- Less than one month
- More than one month
- Never
- Don't know

Information through mass media

Negative press versus positive news (here: generic advertising)

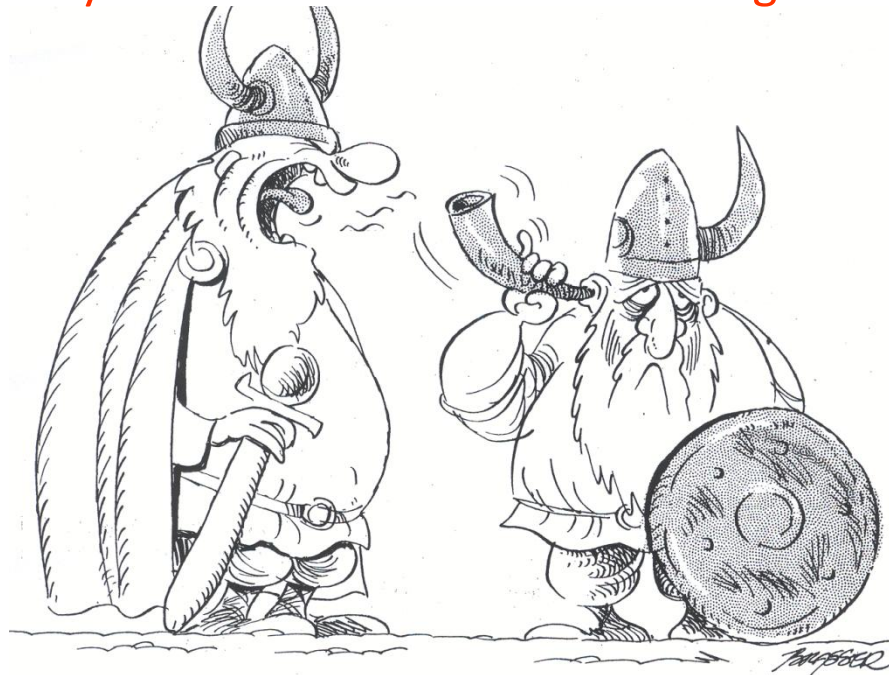


- Ratio of slopes = 5 to 1
- Five units of positive news needed to offset one unit neg press
- “Bad News Hypothesis”

Five
Expensive
Working slowly
Shorter carry-over

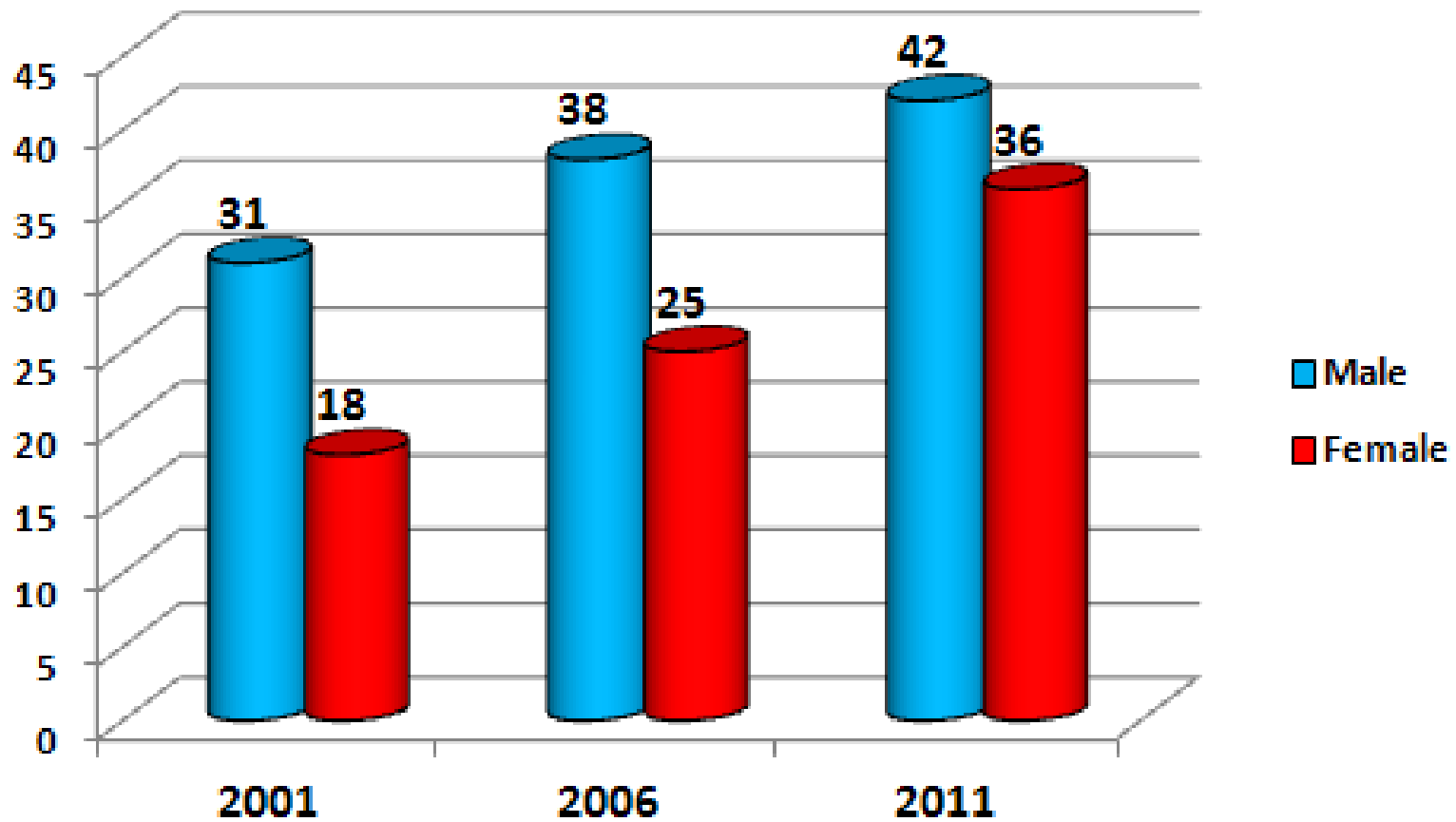
←→

One
For free
Working fast
Longer carry-over



“I eat what I like to eat without worrying too much about the healthiness of what I eat”

(% agree; Flanders; n = 3 x 250; 2001, 2006, 2011)



Possible explanations

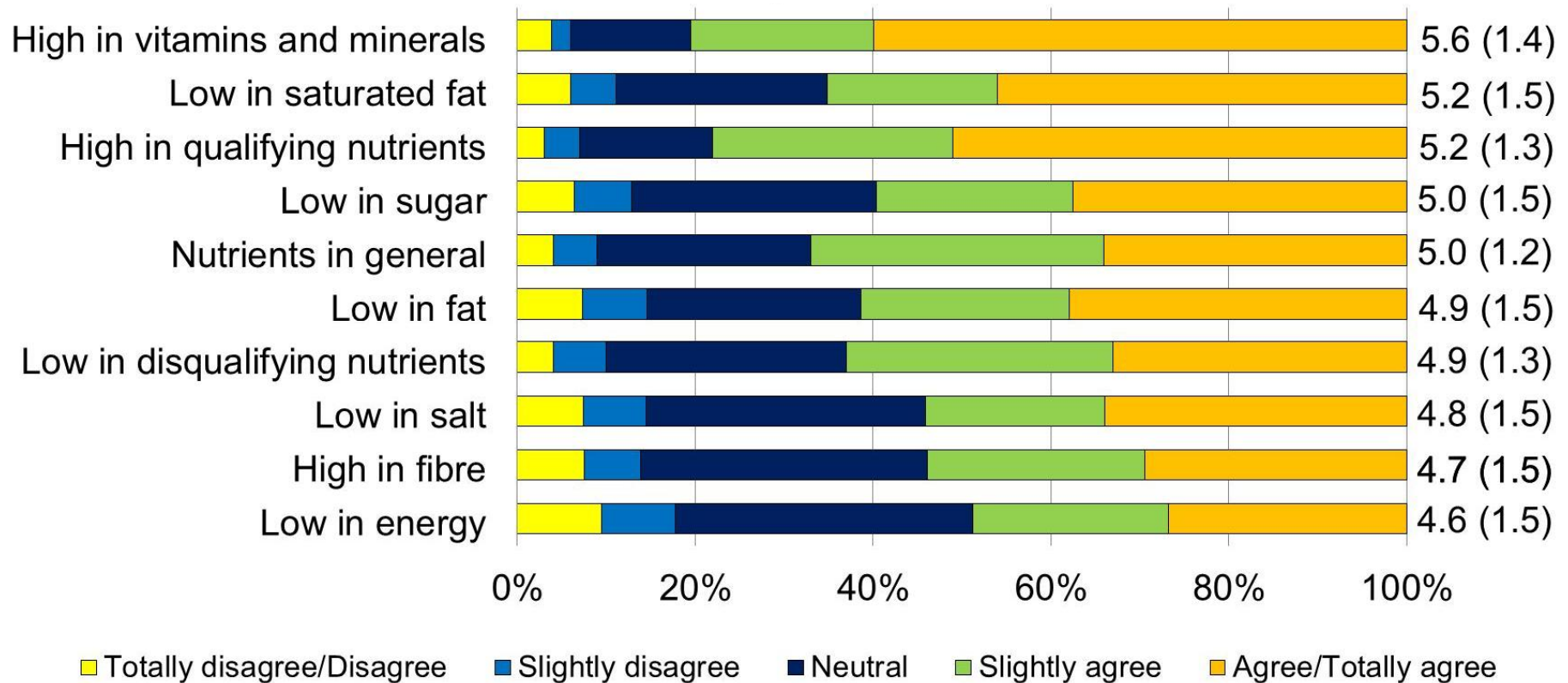
- More trust in the food available on shelf and plate
- More conviction that healthy can be tasteful too
- More "je-m'en-foutisme"; "I don't care any more"
- Other meaning of the concept of health in relation to food:
 - 2001: what one can lose by making the wrong choice
 - 2012: what one can gain by making the right choice

Consumers' perceived importance of nutrition information

(n=4828; BE, FR; IT, PL, NO, SP; 2007)



It is important to me that the food I eat is low / high in ...



Source: Hoefkens, Verbeke, Van Camp (2011) *Food Quality and Preference*

Determinants of perceived importance of being informed about nutrients

Summary of study findings

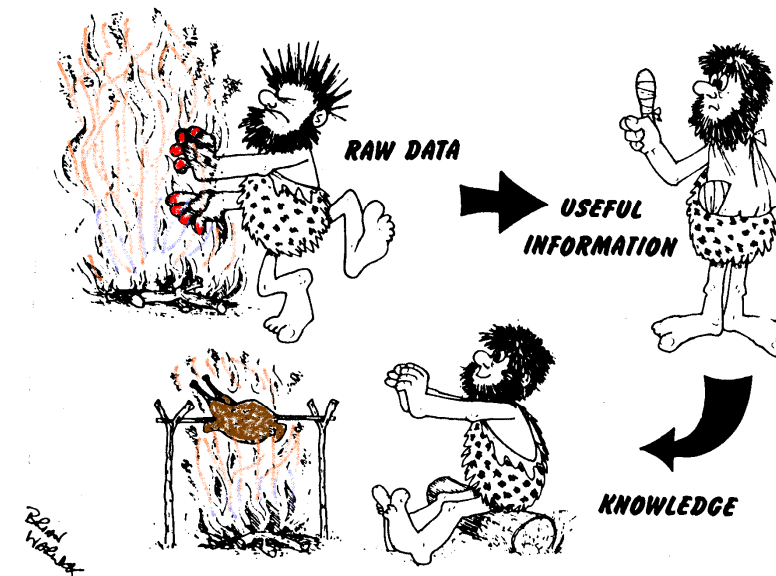
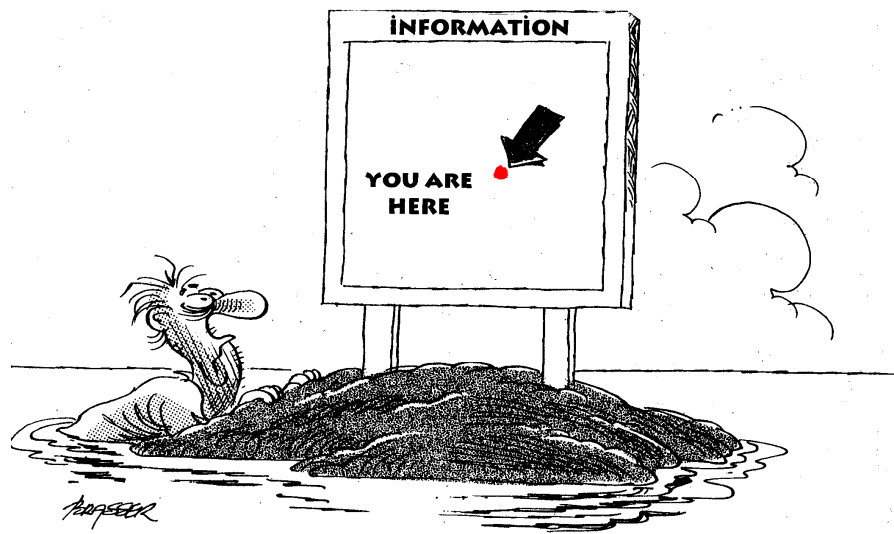
- General **high importance** attached to the nutritional value of foods
- Higher perceived importance for **qualifying** than disqualifying nutrients
- Statistically significant but small differences between **countries**
- Higher perceived importance for **women**, higher **age**, **dieters** and more **health conscious** consumers
- Small effects of children in the household, education and BMI on the perceived importance of the nutritional value of foods

2.

Nutrition information on food labels

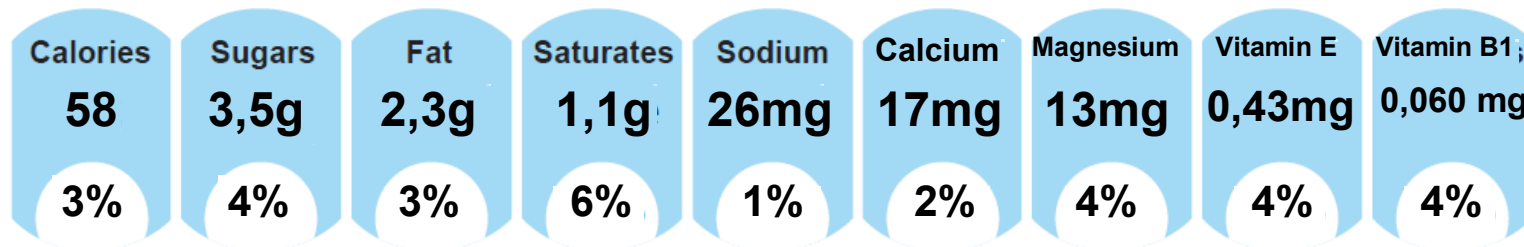
Providing information = Communication

- Data that has context
- Something which has meaning
- That which reduces uncertainty
- That which changes us



More information on food labels?

1 biscuit (12,5 g) contains



% of an adult's guideline daily amount (GDA)

Source: LU

- Increasing nutrition information on pack may result in **information overload**.
- Too much and too complicated information on labels may create **confusion** among consumers.
- On-going debate on the **best format** for presenting nutrition information



More information on food labels ?



- Information overload yielding uncertainty
- Best strategy for users (consumers) to make a decision ?
 - Ignore the information
 - Process the information systematically (time, effort!)
 - Seek and use heuristics (easy decision rules; e.g. brand, label, claim)
 - Avoid and Seek alternative

3.

Interventions to stimulate healthy eating

Classification of Policy Interventions: Number and Type of Diet and Health Measures in the EU identified by EATWELL

Measures supporting informed choice		Measures changing the market environment	
Type	No.	Type	No.
Advertising controls	5	Fiscal measures	3
		Regulate school and workplace meals	14
		Nutrition-related standards	1
		Government action to encourage voluntary reformulation	9
Nutrition information on menus	0	Availability measures for disadvantaged consumers	2
Total (informed choice)	82	Total (market environment)	29

Source: Capacci et al. (2011) *Nutrition Reviews*



www.eatwellproject.eu



Public information campaigns

- Background

- Most common healthy eating policy (incl. nutrition education)
- No direct restrictions, no direct costs to industry, less intrusive
- Mostly targeted at specific nutrients, foods, food groups (e.g. F&V)

- Evaluation of evidence on effectiveness

- Effective w.r.t. awareness, knowledge, claimed behaviour
- No strong evidence w.r.t. actual behaviour or health markers
- Often bundled with other measures
- Sustained impact on long-term behaviours and consumption?

- Cost effectiveness

- Cost effective
- Modest effects only, but comparatively small spending

Nutrition education

- **Background**

- Knowledge of what and how with respect to healthy eating
- Mostly school curricula; also adult workplace interventions
- Wide variation in geographical scope and intensity

- **Evaluation of evidence on effectiveness**

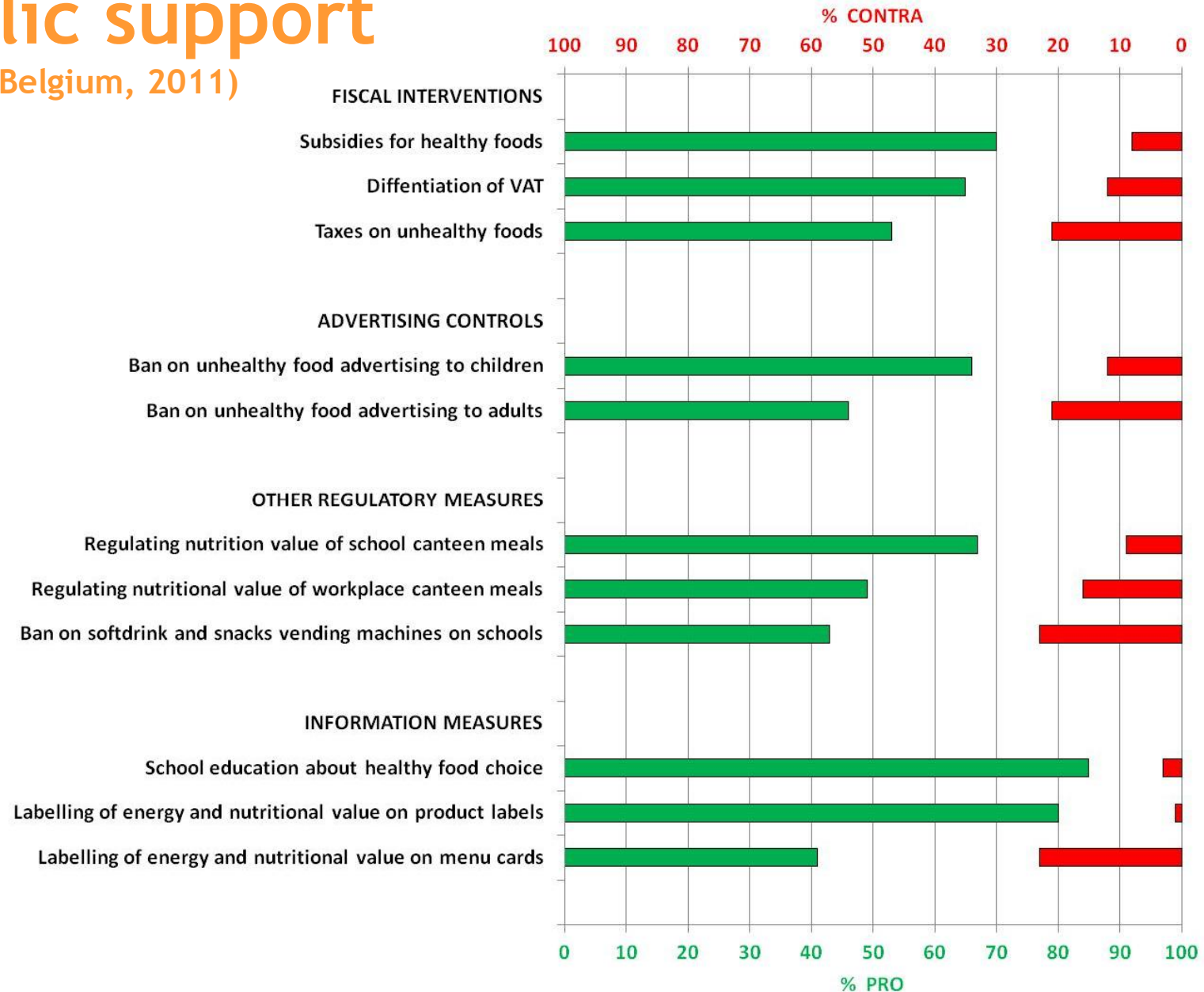
- Impact of education on knowledge and attitudes
- Small scale interventions: positive link education and intake
- Difficult to generalise and long-term effects not known

- **Cost effectiveness**

- Not cost effective
- Discounting over long period from childhood to adverse impacts

Public support

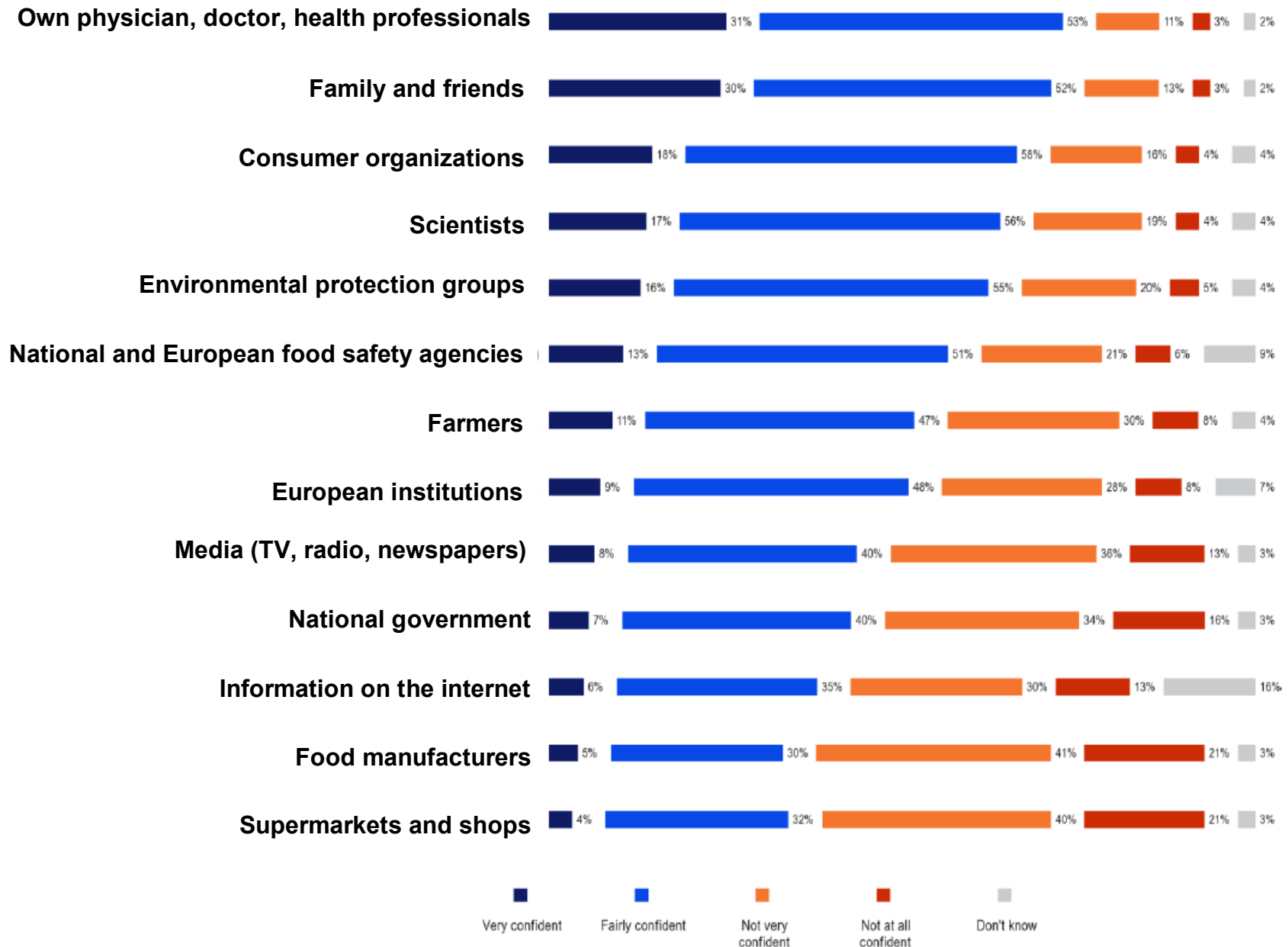
(n=600, Belgium, 2011)



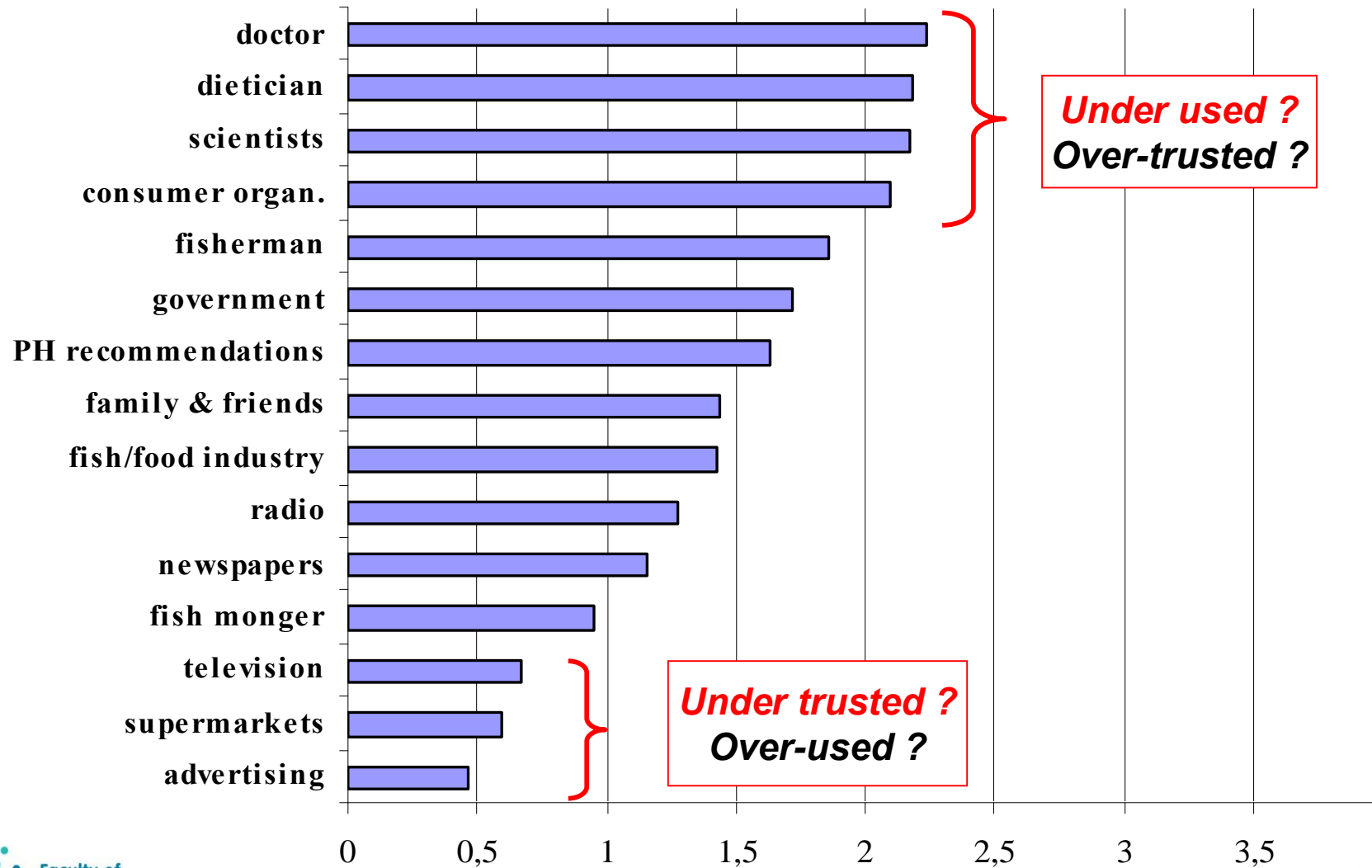
4.

Credibility and use of information sources

Confidence in information sources – EU27 (Source: Eurobarometer 354, 2010; food safety issues)



Difference trust-use of information sources and media (n=4786)



5.

“Nutrition by nature” as a relevant asset

Consumer reactions to foods with nutrition and health claims

Source: Verbeke, Scholderer & Lähteenmäki (2009) *Appetite* 52, 684-692.

– Design :

- Consumer study (n=341) with
- 3 claim types x 3 product concepts
- Nutrition, Health and Reduction of Disease Risk Claim
- Calcium-enriched fruit juice (*unnatural, healthy*)
- Omega-3 enriched spread (margarine) (*natural, unhealthy*)
- Fibre-enriched breakfast cereals (*natural, healthy*)

– Effect measures:

- Convincingness, Credibility,
- Perceived attractiveness, Intention to buy

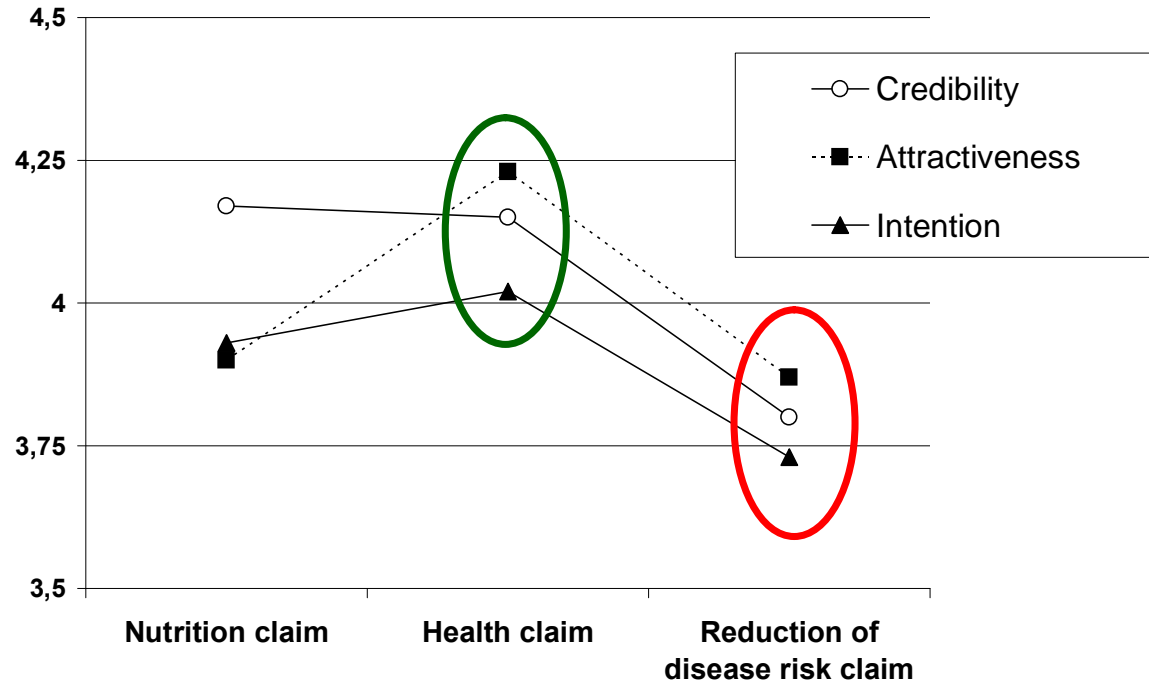
Product concepts

Table 1. Product concepts and health claims used in stimulus materials.

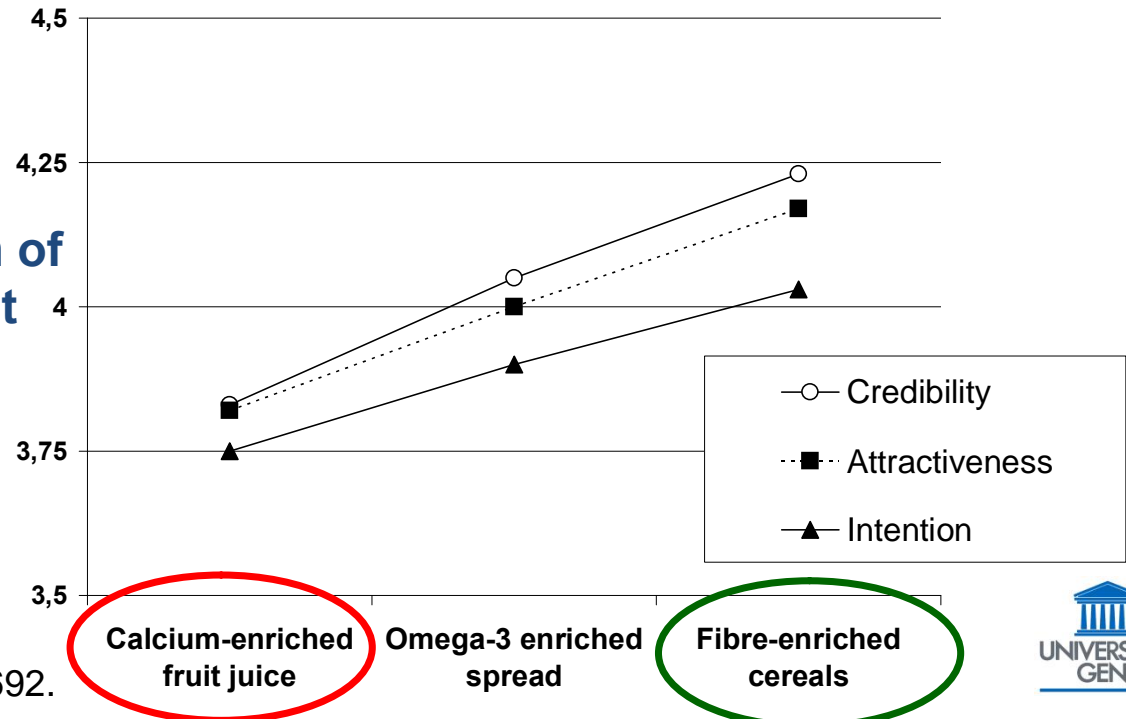
Product concept	Nutrition claim	Health claim	Reduction of disease risk claim
Calcium-enriched fruit juice	Fruit juice enriched with calcium	Fruit juice enriched with calcium strengthens bones	Fruit juice enriched with calcium reduces risk in the development of osteoporosis
Omega-3 enriched spread	Spread enriched with omega-3 fatty acids	Spread enriched with omega-3 fatty acids improves heart health	Spread enriched with omega-3 fatty acids reduces risk in the development of cardio-vascular disease
Fibre-enriched cereals	Breakfast cereals enriched with dietary fibre	Breakfast cereals enriched with dietary fibre improves the intestinal transit function	Breakfast cereals enriched with dietary fibre reduce risk in the development of inflammatory bowel disease

Source: Verbeke et al. (2009) *Appetite* 52, 684-692.

Main effects of claim type and product concept



Most favorable response to the most natural combination of carrier product and ingredient



Verbeke et al. (2009). *Appetite* 52, 684-692.

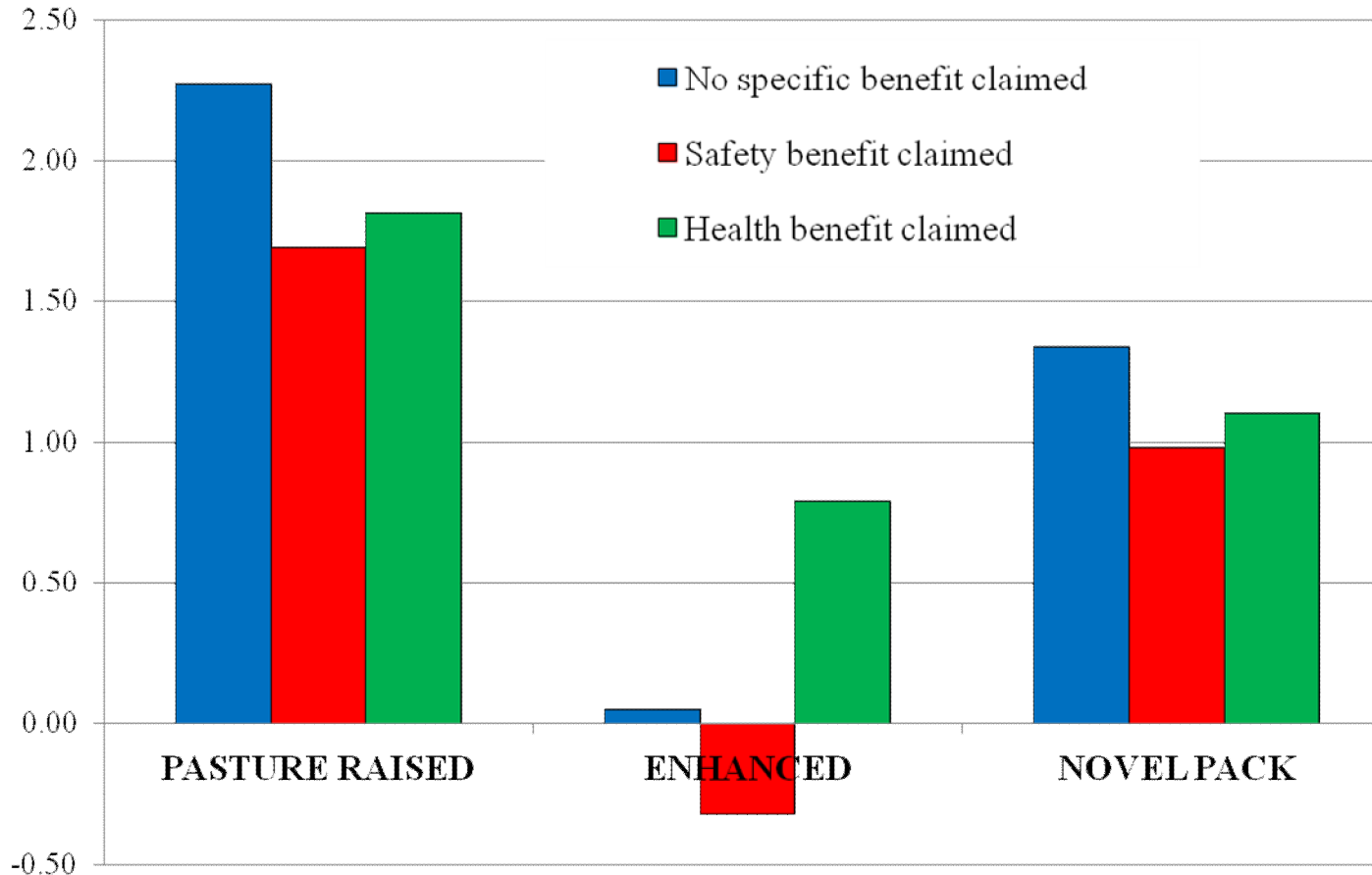
ProSafeBeef quantitative experimental consumer study

- 504 participants in five EU countries
- UK, Germany, Spain, Poland, France
- n = 2,520; Data collection: February/March 2010

Product category	Beef steak	Beef patties for burgers	
TECHNOLOGY	Enhancement	Pasture-raised cattle	Packaging
Claimed BENEFIT	Undisclosed	Safety	Healthiness
Information source	Undisclosed	Retailer	Certification agency



Consumer liking as a function of technology combined with claimed benefit



Source: Grunert, Verbeke et al. (2011), Meat Science

6. Conclusions

- “ Consumer interest in nutrition information:
 - . Rather strong interest, especially in qualifying nutrients’ information
 - . Despite / owing to uncertainties and confusion ?
 - . Evolution from “Taste versus health” to “Taste and health” ?
- “ Information measures to stimulate healthy eating:
 - . Positive impact on awareness, knowledge, attitude, intentions
 - . Wide public support
 - . Impact on intake and health outcomes, and sustained impact ?
- “ Power of negative publicity
- “ Highest degree of confidence in information from medical, health professional and scientific sources, but lowest usage
- “ “Nutrition by nature” : a powerful claim

FP7 KBBE 2012-6: Role of health-related symbols and claims in consumer behaviour

Activity 2.2 Fork to Farm | Area 2.2.1 Consumers

“(...) The project will provide scientific evidence on how consumers understand health claims and health-related symbols, and how those claims and symbols contribute to healthier food choices (...)”

Funding scheme: (Small) Collaborative Project

Title: “Role of health related CLaims and sYMBOLs in consumer behavior



Proposal submitted November 15, 2011

Start date: September 1, 2012

Duration of the project: 4 years

Acronym: CLYMBOL





Dairy Council for Northern Ireland Conference

“Nutrition & Health: What’s New?”

Belfast, 3 May 2013

**Nutrition information and communication:
key challenges**

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Wim Verbeke

Ghent University

Department of Agricultural Economics, Belgium

wim.verbeke@UGent.be