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The effect of ecolabelling on the environmental impact of food purchases in worksite cafeterias

Submission date
01/04/2021

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
07/04/2021

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
12/06/2023

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The environmental impacts of different types of foods are highly variable. Previous research from studies conducted online using a virtual supermarket platform suggests that labels showing environmental impact scores were effective at encouraging people to select more sustainable products. But it remains unclear whether these labels are effective in a real-world setting or remain effective after repeated exposure. The current study aims to test the impact of eco-labels on the environmental impact of foods purchased from worksite cafeterias.

Who can participate?
We will recruit GB-based worksites that have electronic point-of-sale tills, are catered by our foodservice partner, and are able to provide data at a detailed enough level to identify specific meals sold.

What does the study involve?
The intervention involves displaying ecolabels on cafeteria menus for main meal and sandwich options. The labels show environmental impacts of the labelled products as one of 5 letters (A-E), each with its own colour (from dark green to dark red).
To test whether the ecolabels are effective, 38 worksite cafeterias will be randomised so that half (19 sites) display ecolabels and the other half continue selling their products with no additional labelling. We will use the sales data recorded from the worksite cafeterias' tills to examine whether purchases change when the ecolabels are displayed.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no foreseeable risks in taking part. Similarly, there are no specific benefits to individuals taking part. The participating caterer will gain insights into whether ecolabels influence consumer behaviour which may inform their sustainability strategy

Where is the study run from?
The University of Oxford (UK) is running the study in collaboration with a foodservice partner company.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2020 to June 2021.

Who is funding the study?
This research is funded by the Wellcome Trust (UK), Our Planet Our Health (Livestock, Environment and People - LEAP), award number 205212/Z/16/Z

Who is the main contact?
Dr Brian Cook, Senior Researcher, brian.cook@phc.ox.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
WT 205212/Z/16/Z

Study information

Scientific Title
A randomised controlled trial of the impact of food ecolabelling on the environmental impact of purchases from worksite cafeterias

Study objectives
Introducing ecolabels indicating the relative environmental impact of different food options will reduce the environmental impact of overall purchases from the worksite cafeterias

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 02/12/2020, Central University Research Ethics Committee, University of Oxford (Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD, UK; +44(0)1865 616577; ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk), ref: R72710/RE001

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Improving the sustainability and healthiness of diets

Interventions
Worksites are randomised according to matched-pairs randomisation (based on mean sales) to either ecolabel or control (no label) conditions. In the ecolabel condition, labels indicating the relative environmental impact of food options (in the form of a grade from 'A' to E', displayed on a colour-coded globe logo) will be placed on main meals, pre-made salads, soups and sandwiches for a period of 12 weeks.
In the control condition, no changes will be made during the study period.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Environmental impact of purchases: Measured by the mean environmental impact score for purchased products across a week in each worksite cafeteria. The outcome will be calculated from sales data recorded via electronic point-of-sale tills throughout the 12 weeks of the trial, combined with data on the environmental impact of each food option.

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Impact on revenue: Measured by the total weekly revenue (£GBP) from each cafeteria, based on sales data recorded via electronic point-of-sale tills throughout the 12 weeks of the trial
2. Impact on transactions: Measured by the total number of transactions per week in each cafeteria, based on sales data recorded via electronic point-of-sale tills throughout the 12 weeks of the trial
3. Health impact: Measured by total energy (kcal) purchased weekly in each worksite cafeteria (controlling for the total number of transactions), calculated from sales data recorded via electronic point-of-sale tills throughout the 12 weeks of the trial, combined with data on the energy content of each food option

Completion date
31/07/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Recruitment is conducted at the worksite-level.
We will recruit GB-based worksites that:
1. Have electronic point-of-sale tills
2. Are catered by our foodservice partner
3. Are able to provide data at a detailed enough level to identify specific meals sold

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
Not meeting the inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
09/04/2021

Date of final enrolment
12/04/2021

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
University of Oxford
Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences
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Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Oxford

ROR
https://ror.org/052gg0110

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)
Wellcome, WT

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are not expected to be made available due to confidentiality.

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		01/12/2022	12/06/2023	Yes	No