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Australia

Promotion Opportunities

New Glycemic Index Food Label System

2005

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Report Highlights:

An Australian company has developed a new food accreditation system measuring the glycemic index (GI) of foods. Developed in conjunction with diabetes organizations, the system allows for approved foods to have a 'GI symbol' and their GI value listed on the label.

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An Australian company has developed a new food accreditation system measuring the glycemic index of foods. Developed in conjunction with diabetes organizations, the system allows for approved foods to have a 'GI symbol' and their GI value listed on the label.

Similar to the National Heart Foundation's 'tick of approval' system, which revolutionized food buying trends in Australia for the health-conscious, this new food accreditation system is also influencing healthy grocery choices, with Australia proving to be a world leader in the field.

The international food community is now looking to Australia for advice on how to implement a new food testing and commercial accreditation system measuring the glycemic index (GI) of foods.

The GI Symbol Program, run by Glycemic Index Limited, a non-profit company formed by the University of Sydney, Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation is leading the way in GI testing and accreditation.

University of Sydney Professor of Human Nutrition, Jennie Brand-Miller, was responsible for the development of the GI rating, and today, countries including England and Scotland are looking to her and the GI Symbol Program to help establish similar systems in their countries.

Foods in the program have the symbol and their GI value listed on their labels, and food companies or marketing organizations may apply for an annual license - the cost of which is based on yearly product sales - to use the symbol on food labels and in promotional material.

Foods must meet specific nutritional criteria and have had their GI measured using the approved method before they can carry the GI symbol.

In Australia, 19 companies have already become part of the program and are using the GI symbol on various products, with companies including Horticulture Australia, Dairy Farmers, Nestle, George Weston Foods, and Cadbury Schweppes through its Cottrees brand of 100 per cent fruit jams.

Representatives from supermarket giants, Tesco and Sainsbury's, have already visited Australia to learn more about the program, and Mr Hughes said the GI Symbol Program was in the process of making an information video for the Scottish Government.

In Australia last month, the GI Symbol Program welcomed the first fresh fruit to join the scheme - Packham pears. Packham pears have a GI of just 38, giving them a low GI rating, and have one of the highest fiber rankings of all fruit.

It has been suggested that the vast majority of the companies involved in the program have redesigned some products to meet the guidelines of the program.

Research conducted by the GI Symbol Program showed about 80% of Australian consumers understood what GI meant and 30% recognized the GI symbol.

The main challenge to getting the GI symbol on more foods was the testing process, which involves measuring physical human responses, and was not a "test tube" process conducted in a laboratory.

There are only two facilities in Australia testing for GI by the methodology accredited by Professor Brand-Miller and the GI Symbol Program, and they are at the University of Sydney, and the International Diabetes Institute, based out of Deakin University in Melbourne.

Companies interested in joining the GI Symbol program enter into a license agreement with [Glycemic Index Limited](#) if their food(s) meet certain eligibility criteria. License fees are used by Glycemic Index Limited to fund the program's operations and communication activities.

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