Transparent_Food

Contract No.: FP7-KBBE-2009-245003

Transparent_Food

Quality and integrity in food: a challenge for chain communication and transparency research

Coordination and Support Action – CSA

Food Quality and Safety

D 5.1: Report drawn from data collection and review and stakeholder participant workshops on the breadth and range of certification systems and labelling schemes signalling information to consumers and the strengths and weaknesses of these systems and signals

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List of abbreviations

BRC British Retail Consortium

CSO Civil Society Organisation

ISEAL Alliance

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

RFID Radio Frequency Identification

Executive Summary

This report evaluates the variety of forms and methods of signalling information to consumers about their food purchases from a stakeholder perspective. Stakeholders in this report include: certification scheme owners, manufacturers, retailers, non-governmental organisations and producers. The report draws on perceptions and experiences of stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of systems for producing and transmitting signals about food to consumers and from business to business. Particular attention is given to the strengths and weaknesses of certification schemes in signalling information to consumers.

The different types of signals are categorised under separate sections and subsections in line with the *Transparent_Food* project structure. These are 1) Food Safety and Food Quality (composition, nutrition and health) and 2) Food Integrity (origin, environment impacts and process production method, social and cultural and, ethical and social signals such as animal welfare, fair trade. Existing certification schemes were collated to illustrate the breadth of schemes that exist in order to communicate a range of signals.

Stakeholders identified specific challenges around communicating information to consumers. A key challenge centres on the limited space available to food and food packaging in which to provide information. Recognition that consumers spend a short amount of time choosing their food purchases was a further challenge presented by stakeholders. In addition, the diversity of consumers and therefore the diverse information needs of consumers were cited as a key challenge in the communication of information to consumers by stakeholders.

Logos and the certification schemes they represent are regarded as being a significant tool in communicating information to consumers by stakeholders. Moreover, certification schemes enable retailers and non-governmental organisations to meet their own agendas and aims, especially in the context of environmental impacts and sustainable food production. Third party independent certification schemes were considered by stakeholders as critical in ensuring the validity and credibility of information signalled to consumers. Indeed, stakeholders such as retailers, manufacturers and certification scheme owners cooperate over some signalling issues to effectively communicate messages to consumers.

Signals highlighted by stakeholders as being especially challenging to communicate to consumers were food safety, origin, environmental impacts and sustainability and, animal welfare. The reasons for this however were diverse. For example, complexities regarding the issues and methodological approaches to sustainability were regarded to hinder effective signalling on this issue. For other signals, such as origin and animal welfare, some stakeholders reflected that legislation measures in these areas lacked robustness and were selective. Consequently, certification schemes were identified as tool to overcome the anomalies arising from legislation.

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The management of signals by stakeholders is a further focus of this report. The management of signals involves particular practices of information editing. Information editing in this context refers to the use, presentation and accessibility of information and the editing of information by stakeholders. Information editing enables stakeholders to develop coherent signal narratives about their food products and to maintain the difficult tension between offering too much and too little information to consumers. As a result, the pressure to provide information can, be reduced, in part, by the choice editing of products sold. A further development is the supply chain management by some retailers and manufacturers. In one case, this choice editing reaches back down along the supply chain in terms of setting sustainability criteria for all procurement choices. These emerging realities in contemporary food chain management need to be incorporated into our understandings of the current state of food chain transparency.

Finally, non-label provision of information is regarded as a further means to overcome the spatial and temporal limitations afforded by label based methods of information transmission. Non-label provision of information invariably occurs post-purchase and includes access to telephone care lines and websites. Stakeholders reflected on the possibility of future signalling practices which will, according to them, increasingly rely on technology at both the point of purchase and post-purchase. Signalling information may involve using hand held devices and greater use of RFID technology in the future. This will also make greater use of traceable information.

The report authors would like to thank all stakeholders who contributed to the discussion upon which this report is based.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report draws on stakeholder discussions to answer the following key questions:

- What are the stakeholders' (retailers, manufacturers and producers) perceptions and experiences of signally information about food to consumers?

- What are the strengths and weakness of signals based on certification schemes such as logos?

- What additional methods and practices are used to transmit information to consumers about food? How are these alternative approaches enacted, for example, by corporate social responsibility agendas, in store campaigns and brand management?

The questions reflect an intention of the report to assess the effectiveness of using logos based on certification schemes based on stakeholders' perspectives and experiences. Recognised within the approach to this deliverable is that logos are one of a multitude of ways to inform consumers about food. Moreover, not only does diversity exist in the range of methods but also in the types of signals sent to consumers.

In addition to exploring what methods of information transmission are effective (and why), the report also investigates what the stakeholders are seeking to achieve and the value of sharing and transmitting of information. For example, the motivation underlying the move to transmit information may not be related to a product itself but is instead part of a broader strategy linked to a company's broader corporate social responsibility agenda.

1.1 How this report links with the *Transparent_Food* Project

Work package 4 has identified the social, ethical and environmental concerns around food, what information is available and provided an assessment of transparency based on schemes claiming to signal information about one or each of these concerns. The systems used to transmit the broad range of signals to consumers identified in the data from work package 4 forms part of the discussion in this report.

Work package 5 contains several tasks focusing on the issues around signals for transparency and trust. Task WP 5.2 has focused on how public policy goals are enacted through certification schemes and legal requirements linked to labelling of foods. Legal requirements influence and govern the type of information signalled to consumers, for example, marketing standards regulate the terms that can be used to describe foods. In

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addition, a further task of work package 5 is the provision of a roadmap of consumer experiences and requests and the contexts for such requests and priorities.

This report, in its focus on stakeholders adds a further dimension to the discussions generated by the other tasks and subsequent reports from work package 5. The position of stakeholders mentioned in this report represent a crucial nexus as stakeholders receive both guidance and instruction from governments and legislators as well as seek to respond to the demands of consumers. Moreover, stakeholders have their agenda and aims concerning the signalling of information around food to consumers. Thus, stakeholders are uniquely positioned to comment and reflect on transparency issues and signals to consumers.

1.2 Methodology

Our tasks in this deliverable focused on collecting and analysing data on current food industry practices and experiences of systems for producing and transmitting signals about food to consumers (with particular attention being paid to the retailers). The development of certification schemes and the variety of forms and methods that the signals are presented to their consumers by food value chains were collated (appendix 1) and analysed to present breadth of practice and experiences of the industry and of food certification schemes. Discussions and interviews with stakeholders provided the opportunity to elicit views of the strengths and weaknesses of their systems and identify challenges around specific signal types as well as share ideas around best practice[1].

1.3 Signal Categories

Producers, manufacturers and retailers seek to communicate a range of messages about to consumers. Such signals may include information relating to quality, food safety, price as well as signals that seek to elevate their own position against market competitors. In the *Transparent_Food* project however, the focus is on exploring what types of information exists along the food chain and the methods and forms of transmitting that information. Consequently, there is less focus on signals that relate to business practice and integrity or competitive behaviour (such as price differences, brand values and meaning). This distinction is both subtle and challenging because information concerning food and food practices is used to enable competitive advantage and brand integrity/awareness. In other words brand strategy for say, a global manufacturer or a corporate retailer, can incorporate the utilisation of third party certification schemes with their respective logos as well as other food supply management to provide signals and messages about their food product offering to consumers.

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[1] Descriptions of stakeholders are listed in appendix 2.

The different types of signals are as numerous as the methods and systems used to transmit signals to consumers. The types of signals can be broadly categorised under the headings of 1) Food Quality (including composition and food safety) and 2) Food Integrity. Table 1 provides a definition of each type and sub-type of signal identified in this report.

Examples of the different types of signals enacted in certification schemes are provided in Appendix 1. This list illustrates the range of certification and assurance schemes and identifies the types of signals generated from each. The approach used to classify schemes in Appendix 1 is based on the primary and secondary signals sent to consumers. The inclusion of the category 'secondary signals' in the table is in part recognition that that some schemes may seek to signal that they incorporate more than one aim within the scope of their scheme. For example 'organic', as a signal communicated to customers via a logo, may be underpinned by a certification process that includes a focus on animal welfare, ethical and fair treatment of workers as well as environmental goals such as maintaining biodiversity. The signals reflect a qualitative evaluation of what the organisations claim as the aims and associated standards they adhere and align themselves to. The classification and categorisation of signals devised in this document relies on information displayed on scheme owners' website[2]. Having identified the types of signals that are communicated to the consumers, the next section focuses on the methods of signal transmission, for example, non-label and label methods of signalling to consumers.

Table 1: Typology of signals

Signal Area	Definition and background
FOOD QUALITY	
Food Safety and Food Quality (Composition)	In the UK, public food scares and concerns (e.g. BSE and salmonella outbreaks) have contributed to the emergence of schemes which seek to visibly assure food safety. British Lion Quality (eggs) and Assured Food Standards (AFS) are two prominent examples of certification schemes that use logos to indicate assurance that a set of standards has been met. Food safety is a signal which seeks to assure consumers that food has been produced, handled, stored and prepared to meet standards which fulfil regulatory requirements concerning food safety and is safe to eat.
Nutrition and Health	Nutrition and health signals concern information relating to the nutrition content of food such as fat, sugar, and guidance on advice regarding the recommended daily amounts of each. Signals under this heading may also aim to send messages that promote responsible drinking or a healthy and balanced diet.

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[2] The Information on which the categorisation of signals is based is correct as of when visiting certification websites.

Food Quality	Quality is a matter of definition and is closely linked with other categories of classification listed here. For example, quality can be conceived as an attribute when a product possesses an attribute valued by the consumer. This attribute of quality might be linked to the process and method of production (such as environmental impact of product or place of origin and provenance), the organoleptic merits of a product or an assurance that a particular set of standards has been met throughout the chain of production.
FOOD INTEGRITY	
Origin	Origin as a signal concerns information about the origin or provenance of food. At first sight, the meaning of the origin as a signal should be reasonably comprehensible. Confusion may arise however due to different sites of production in the rearing/growing, processing, manufacturing and packing of food. Thus, composite foods may be multi-origin. Furthermore, traceability systems used along the food supply may be used to signal information concerning food safety around origin.
Environment – Process Production Method and Impacts	Environmental signals are diverse and encompass a wide range of production and processing issues. Signals linked to environment may focus on a particular type of production method process that seeks to minimise or manage environmental impact. A case in point to illustrate this is the Soil Association which promotes and signals organic production method. Another example is the Leaf Marque that represents a scheme that follows practices of integrated farm management seeks to signal to the consumer that biodiversity and the limited use of pesticides has been maintained throughout production. This approach to production contrasts to organic farming but nonetheless both relate to environment-based signals. Finally, while some signals to communicate information linked to production method, other signals seek to provide information on product impacts – such as carbon footprint labelling and sustainable sourcing policies.
Ethical and Social: Animal Welfare	Signals linked to animal welfare seek to provide assurance about the welfare of animals, for example, livestock from rearing to slaughter.
Ethical and Social: Fair Trade	The messages behind fair trade signals aim to indicate to consumers that fair trading practices, for example, fair prices for producers and suppliers have been paid and fair contractual terms have been agreed. In addition, fair labour practices, such as wage and working conditions may be included in signals under this category.
Cultural and Social	Cultural and social based signals inform consumers about the suitability of foods for those whose dietary requirements are based on social and cultural practices, for example, Kosher, Halal or vegetarian.

1.4 Label and non-label based signals

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Information intended for consumers can be communicated in a range of ways. Information can be signalled to consumers at both the point of sale, in the space-of-sale – for example, in-store and, virtually, via websites. Labelling is a method of communicating information to consumers via the product itself.

The broader processes of transparency and signalling to consumers are illustrated in figure 1 and figure 2. Signals are suggested to be either label or non-label based. The different modes of signalling are captured (e.g. retailer or manufacturer led) as well as the distinction between mandatory information and voluntary information. Figure 2 (non- label based signals) complements figure 1 as it continues to focus on signals to the customer/consumer. Figure 2 illustrates the types of signals which are non-label based i.e. are transmitted via means other than the product itself.

Label based signals can be based on a mix of mandatory and voluntary labelling. One area exemplified in figure 3 and figure 4, are the signals that are linked to health and nutrition related information. As figure 3 and 4 illustrate, some signals are regulated by mandatory legal labelling requirements, for example, the inclusion of information on the food label about allergens. *Directive 2007/68/EC* details the list of 14 ingredients that are identified as allergenic[3]. Clear labelling indicating that products contain these products is required under the Directive. With regards health claims, *EC Regulation No 1924/2006* is the regulation for which accordance of all approved health claims is required. General claims about benefits to overall good health, such as 'healthy' are only allowed if they are an appropriate and approved claim. Council Directive 90/496/EEC on Nutrition Labelling of Foodstuffs regulates the labelling of the nutrition content of foods.

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[3] Allergen labelling also represents the signalling of food safety.

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Figure 1: Label-based signals

Key: The yellow boxes represent the signals and logos which might be present on a label .The light green boxes represent information that is obligatory. The black dashed line indicates how two forms of information can be interlinked i.e. from retailers and manufacturers. The darker orange boxes below the light yellow boxes represent certification processes. The red dashed lines represent business to business transparency that is suggested to operate.

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Figure 2 Non-label based signals

Key: This chart focuses on non-label based signals to the consumer. It shows the range of spaces used by retailers and manufacturers to communicate information to consumers about products and production processes along supply chains. Corporate Social Responsibility reports, available on websites, are an opportunity in which retailers and manufacturers showcase examples of best practice of production and processing and indicate progress on a range of environmentally sustainable-based aims.

Figure 3 Mandatory and voluntary health and dietary related signals

Allergen Advice –Mandatory
Directive 2007/68/EC details the list of 14 ingredients which are defined as allergenic. Article 14 of EC Regulation 178/2002

Celery Cereals containing gluten (wheat, barley, rye and oats)Crustaceans (lobster and crab);eggs; fish; lupin; milk; molluscs (mussels and oysters); mustard; nuts ;peanuts; sesame seeds; soybeans; sulphur dioxide and sulphites (above 10 mg per kg or litre).

Health Claims – Mandatory
General claims about benefits to overall good health, such as 'healthy' or 'good for you' will be only allowed to be used if accompanied by an appropriate and approved claim. Health claims are governed by EC regulation No 1924/2006. Annex of EC Regulation 1924/2006 sets out specific terms.

Examples of nutrition claims: low energy; energy-reduced; low fat; fat-free; low-saturated fat; low sugars; sugars-free; low sodium/salt; source of fibre; natural/naturally.

'Specialist Diet' – Voluntary
Claims regarding suitability of food for vegetarians are underpinned by what is known as a ''voluntary claim'. This means it is illegal for the labelling information to include anything that is false or likely to mislead. Recently, Article 35 of the proposal for a regulation on the provision of food information defines the context in which the terms vegetarian and vegan may be used.

Examples include: kosher, vegetarian, vegan and halal

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Figure 4 Dietary and health-related signals
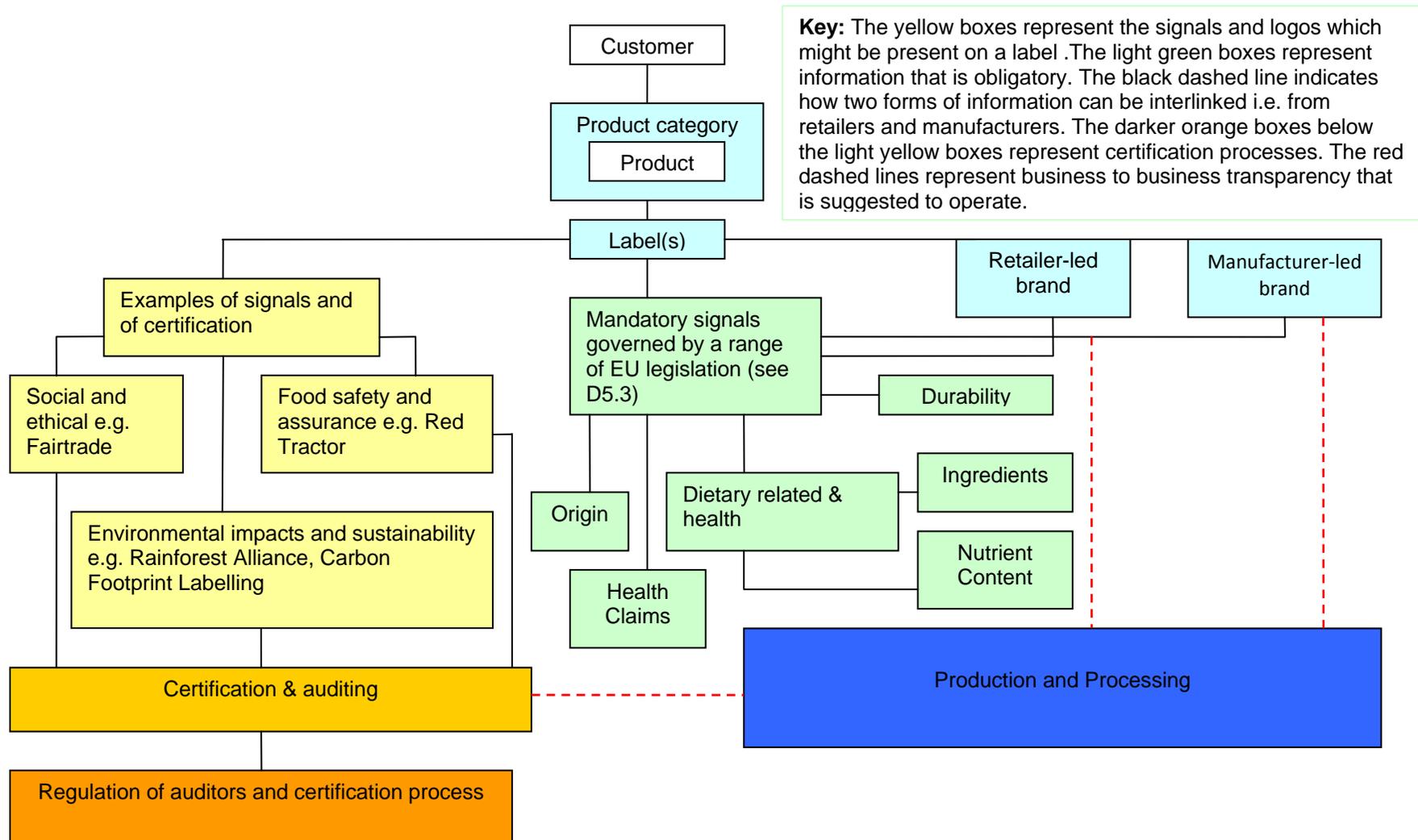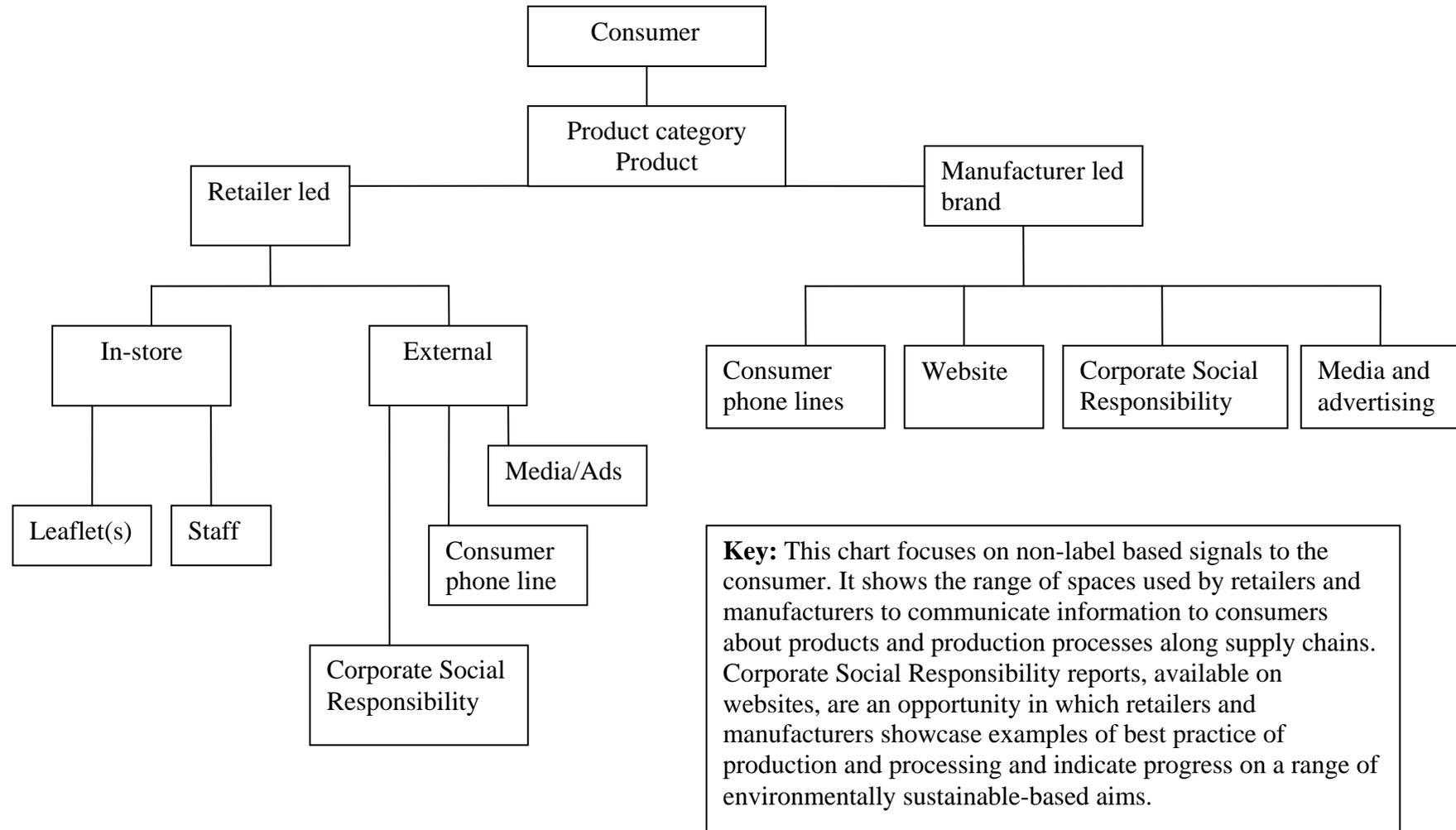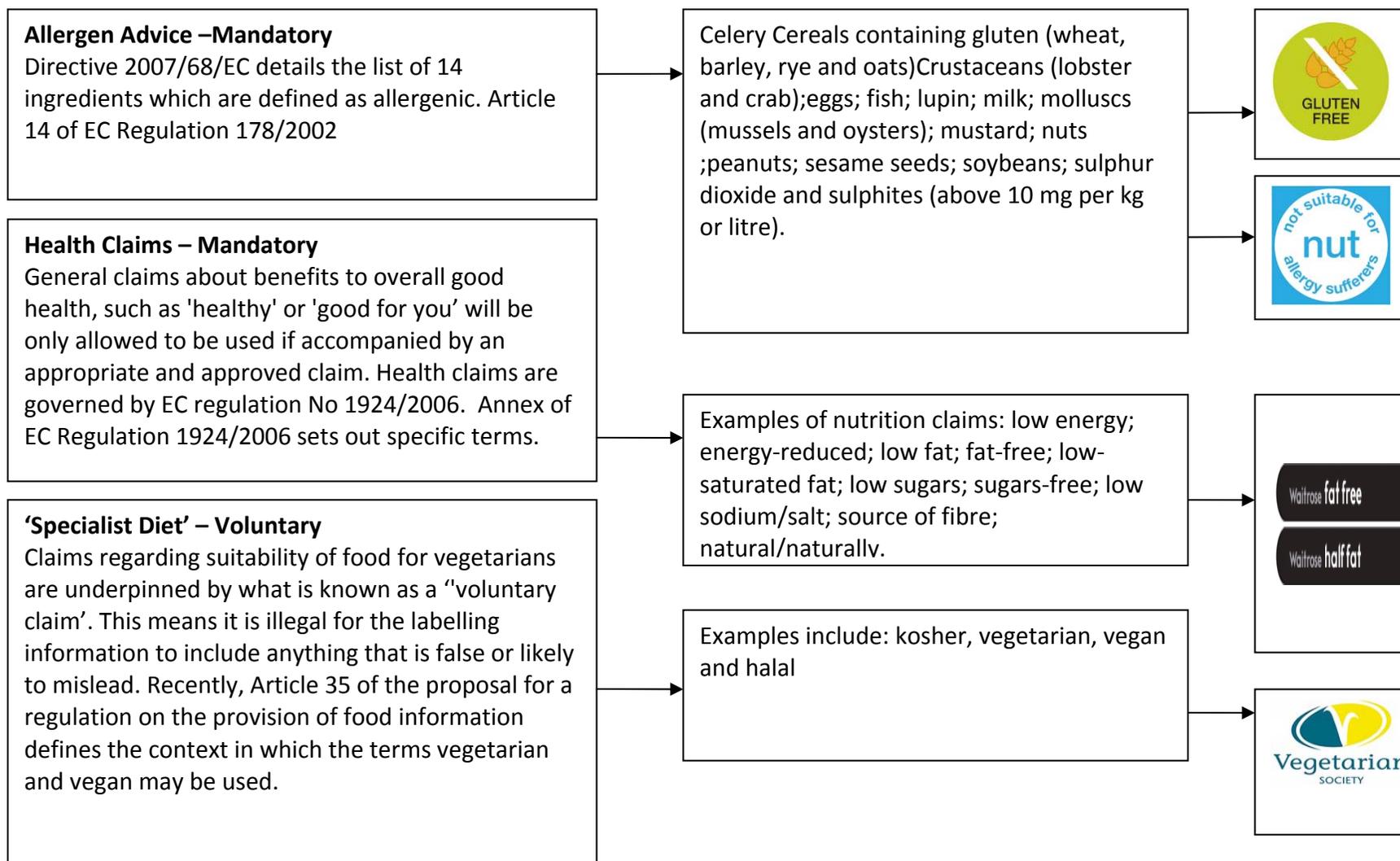
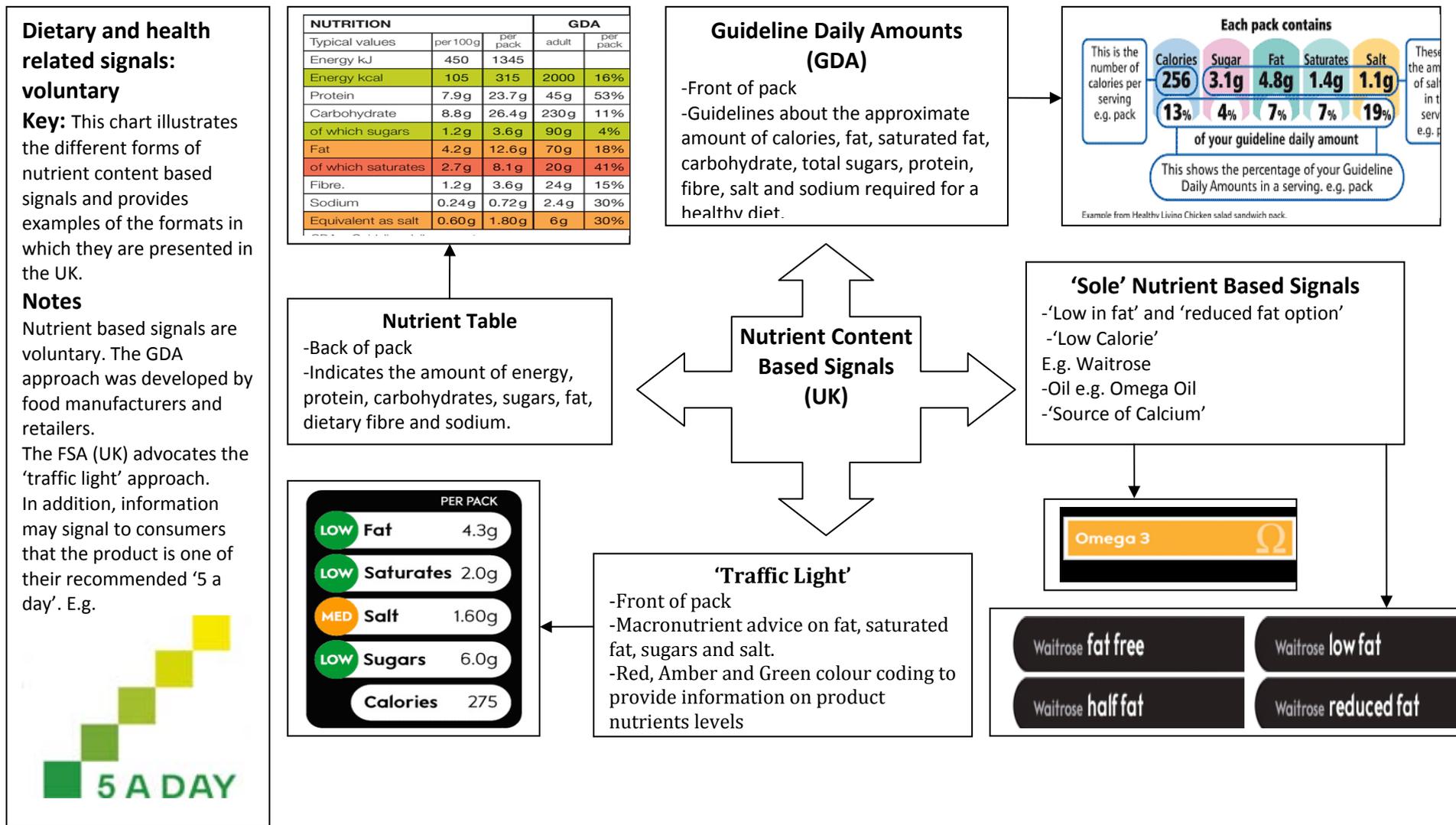**Dietary and health related signals: voluntary**

Key: This chart illustrates the different forms of nutrient content based signals and provides examples of the formats in which they are presented in the UK.

Notes

Nutrient based signals are voluntary. The GDA approach was developed by food manufacturers and retailers.
The FSA (UK) advocates the 'traffic light' approach.
In addition, information may signal to consumers that the product is one of their recommended '5 a day'. E.g.

NUTRITION			GDA	
Typical values	per 100g	per pack	adult	per pack
Energy kJ	450	1345		
Energy kcal	105	315	2000	16%
Protein	7.9g	23.7g	45g	53%
Carbohydrate	8.8g	26.4g	230g	11%
of which sugars	1.2g	3.6g	90g	4%
Fat	4.2g	12.6g	70g	18%
of which saturates	2.7g	8.1g	20g	41%
Fibre.	1.2g	3.6g	24g	15%
Sodium	0.24g	0.72g	2.4g	30%
Equivalent as salt	0.60g	1.80g	6g	30%

Nutrient Table
-Back of pack
-Indicates the amount of energy, protein, carbohydrates, sugars, fat, dietary fibre and sodium.

Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA)
-Front of pack
-Guidelines about the approximate amount of calories, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, total sugars, protein, fibre, salt and sodium required for a healthy diet.

Nutrient Content Based Signals (UK)

'Traffic Light'
-Front of pack
-Macronutrient advice on fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt.
-Red, Amber and Green colour coding to provide information on product nutrients levels

'Sole' Nutrient Based Signals
-'Low in fat' and 'reduced fat option'
 -'Low Calorie'
E.g. Waitrose
-Oil e.g. Omega Oil
-'Source of Calcium'

2 STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

This section of the report focuses on the perspectives held by stakeholders on the topic of signalling information to consumers. Stakeholders include certification scheme owners, producers, manufacturers, retailers and NGOs/CSOs. The key themes explored in this section include: the challenges involved with signalling information to consumers, the strengths and weaknesses of using certification schemes and their associated logos to signal information to consumers and the challenge raised by specific types of signals. The challenges raised by specific types of signal include: animal welfare, environmental impacts of food production and process, sustainability and origin. This section also reveals an emerging approach taken by stakeholders in response to the limitations and challenges of signalling via logos and labels. This concerns the role of stakeholders, in particular, retailers and manufacturers in managing signals through strategies of information-editing and choice editing. Best practice alternatives to logos and labels are discussed, for example, the non-label provision of information to consumers. Finally, some thoughts, expressed by stakeholders, on the future of transparency and signalling are discussed.

2.1 Signalling to consumers: Key constraints and considerations

Deciding what to signal to consumers is influenced in the first instance by legal obligations around information provision, for example, those found in marketing standards and mandatory labelling regulations. Signals around nutrition and dietary related advice are an example of this (see figures 2 and 3).

Discussions with stakeholders reveal the challenge and importance of signalling information to consumers. Beyond mandatory-based signals, a key challenge is possessing knowledge on what consumers would like to know about their food purchases. One approach used to find out what consumers' are interested in knowing mentioned by stakeholders was the use of focus groups of consumers. A comment by one stakeholder (#2), a global manufacturer, illustrates the diversity of consumer interests and what they may wish to know about their food and food purchase. They said:

> People have lots of different interests and motivations and while some may be interested in nutritional value of the food and their family's health, other people are motivated by animal welfare or fair trade issues. So people do have different interests and at different points in time as well.

Many of the stakeholders commented on the short time in which consumers have to make decisions about their food and food purchases. Consumers are generally regarded to have an interest and concern with purchasing food that meets their requirements and needs but can only afford a limited amount of time choosing and purchasing food products.

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A further challenge is the sheer volume of information concerning food that is potentially available. Tracking and tracing systems have contributed to the increase in information. A tension exists regarding a) how much consumers wish to know b) the time they have to receive the information at the point of purchase c) the space available in which to communicate information on or near the food products.

Therefore signals, in order to be effective, need to representative of a broader message or need to be linked to system of signalling, of which consumer recognition must be relatively high. One method, the use of certification schemes, is discussed in greater depth in section 2.2 of this report.

More broadly stakeholders, in particularly, retailers and manufacturers, are required to develop an approach to signalling to consumers about their food which provides a balance between supporting consumers' right to know and what consumers wish to know and are specifically interested in. The importance of communication in enabling consumer confidence was emphasised by stakeholder (#2), a global manufacturer. For this company, a number of principles guide communication with consumers including 'support for consumers' right to know' about the products they purchase.

2.2 Certification schemes: key strengths

This section draws upon stakeholder perceptions of the strengths and effectiveness of certification schemes in communicating information to businesses and consumers. The effectiveness of certification schemes transcend beyond signalling to consumers however as reflections by stakeholders reveal how such schemes and their associated standards play an important role in meeting the goals of NGOs, retailers and manufacturers.

2.2.1 Certification schemes and signals: Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer

Certification schemes are effective in their business-to-business communication as much as business-to-consumer communication. The processes which underpin certification schemes, for example auditing, results in confidence that compliance is reached on particular standards (stakeholder #1)[4].

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[4] Lack of adherence to regulations rules on faming practice rules has contributed to some severe problems for farming and at time, even crisis. Two stakeholders cited crisis in farming during the 1990s as a significant driving force in the creation of their schemes (one based in Germany and one in the UK).
Two examples of this were identified by the UK based stakeholder (#1), the first concerns BSE; 'the BSE outbreak had a huge impact on the British farming industry as farmers were unable to export beef. Facing this, retailers began to import from abroad'. Secondly, more recently, the UK's foot and mouth outbreak 'devastated' the farming industry 'so the scheme and its associated rules, inspection and audit process is as much about governing farm practices and using those processes to safeguard the reputation of the industry'.

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The effectiveness of the certification schemes goes beyond signals to consumers. As this stakeholder pointed out, business-to-business signals and trust are critical too.

> 'So our primary purpose is that business to business communication so we inspect a farm against a set of agreed standards primarily so that the next guy in the chain can have some information about their suppliers and we communicate that by way of certification. So the supplier has to demonstrate that they have passed the test'

<div align="right">Certification Scheme Owner (S#1)</div>

With regards to the effectiveness of certification schemes in signalling information to consumers, the certification scheme owner quoted above summed up consumer-facing signalling as 'making a virtue out of a necessity'. In a comparable way, another scheme, also saw the development of its standards and organisation predate the development of the consumer facing logo. The Marine Stewardship Council's logo, used to signal information about the work of the Marine Stewardships Council, was, according to one interviewee an outcome of the necessity to connect consumers with efforts being made to source fish sustainably.

Thus the systems that generate information (for example, certification-standard systems) and exist to fulfil business-to-business signal obligations may be a foundation upon which a logo can be launched. The creation of a logo in this way demonstrate compliance to the consumer and is a further way of utilising or using information along the supply chain or around a particular food production or process practice (beyond business to business signals).

A recent report published in the UK by Which? –'Making Sustainable Food Choices Easier' detailed the low levels of consumer recognition of logos existing in the UK market[5]. According to the report however, consumers expressed their interest in receiving clearer messages via labels on social, ethical and environmental issues. Interestingly, the report focused on logo recognition rather than understanding the fuller meaning represented by the logo. Consequently, the effectiveness of logos rests with their ability to be recognised rather than communicate significant amounts of information per se. Logos thus represent a tool of communication but *recognition* rather than *understanding* is a key function. On the topic of the effectiveness of logos in signalling information to consumers, stakeholder #1 made the following point. In their opinion, of significant importance is how consumers act, rather than what they recognise and understand from the logo. They said:

> 'What we don't do is give people an exam and not allow them to buy the product unless they pass the exam. So what matters to us is recognition and influence and if they are influenced by the label for the wrong reasons but they are still positively by then we don't care very much because they are still acting in the way we want them to act.'

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[5] http://www.which.co.uk/documents/pdf/making-sustainable-food-choices-easier-231317.pdf accessed 13/12/2010

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In addition, the logo was considered an effective indicator of retailers' support (through stocking of certified products) of UK farmers. A certification scheme owner (S#1) explained:

> 'For example because our logo is only on British products it exposes fairly clearly what British offer they [retailers'] have, for example on the chicken or poultry counter. So consumers can see at a glance, where there is British product…To some of our constituents that is quite important to have that transparency and it is probably not the retailers who are getting the benefit of that, but it is probably the producers.'

Consumer recognition of logos was emphasised by other stakeholders as important in the success of signalling certain messages to consumers. This stakeholder, a UK major own brand food retailer (S#8), explained the importance in choosing a certification scheme that not only matches the agenda of a retailer (for example, of fair trade, sustainable sourcing etc) but also one which has some weight in the market and has 'the most credibility and resonance with the consumer'. This involves selecting one of the 'five or six labels out there that have the ability to transcend the noise and get through to consumer'[6].

2.2.2 The Utility of Certification schemes: meeting the goals of stakeholders.

Logos can both signal information about the product and provide assurance about the food product. For example, carbon footprint labelling aims to inform consumers about the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which have been emitted as part of a food's production, process and distribution and disposal. A figure of calculated results is provided in kilograms[7]. Logos which provide assurance about food may do so on a set of selected standards, often these are usually centred around quality, food safety and indicate that a set of standards have been met in the course of the production, process, storage, packing and transportation[8].

A range of stakeholders expressed the role of independent and third party schemes as significant in signalling messages and information to consumers. Signals generated from independent certification schemes are considered by stakeholders to be based on verifiable and credible information. This is because, as one stakeholder explained, the standards and related system of audit enables 'confidence that producers within our system are complying with the standard'.

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[6] These include: MSC, FSC, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance and Soil Association.
[7] The Carbon Trust is responsible for a carbon footprint-labelling scheme in the UK.
[8] An illustrative example of an assurance scheme logo is the one used by Assured Food Standards (see appendix 1 for an image of the logo).

Stakeholders discussed the diversity of 3rd party certification schemes. Diversity, in this context, refers to the range of certification available, each representing different food related issues. Currently, there is not one single third party scheme that represents all the signals identified in this report (refer to table 1). Consequently, stakeholders, such as retailers and manufacturers, seeking to certify particular products have to prioritise signals they wish to communicate to consumers and choose a scheme which best fits their supply chain requirements and goals. A global manufacturer (S#2) explained the rationale behind using third party certification schemes.

> In order to communicate that we are meeting the highest standards to consumers, consumers need to have some credible, independent, third party communication of that. There is not one single scheme, which covers animal welfare, environmental sustainable, social and labour standards and so on. So we look at commodities on a case-by-case basis and we look at who is the best partner to work with. And some cases it is not clear-cut and there is more than one to work with. But one thing is for sure, whether it is sugar, palm oil, tea, or ice cream ingredients, the partners that we use are members of ISEAL- the very highest standards.

Membership of ISEAL Alliance by certification scheme owners therefore sends a message to retailers and manufacturers seeking to certify their food products. The International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL Alliance) is an organisation that describes itself as a global association for social and environmental standards. ISEAL works by advising certification schemes on standard systems and conferring independent approval on the standards used to underpin certification schemes by its members (for example, Rainforest Alliance and MSC). This contributes to the credibility of the standards of certification schemes. The ISEAL Alliance operates by working with its member organisations to develop credible standards.

ISEAL develops codes of good practice that are implemented by the member organisations, for example, the Code Of Good Practice For Setting Social and Environmental Standards. In 2010 the ISEAL Alliance began to develop a Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Systems (Impacts Code) and has also expressed its intent to develop a Verification Code of Good Practice in the near future. This indicates that greater attention towards capturing information relating to impacts of standards will be made in the future. As yet, however, ISEAL Alliance does not have a code of good practice, which covers the extent of the claims that may be made from following a set of standards. Similarly ISEAL Alliance does not provide guidance on the subsequent labelling and use of logos.

Some retailer and manufacturer stakeholders spoke of the effectiveness of 3rd party scheme certification schemes in enabling them to meet their company goals concerning sustainability. Thus such schemes are part of a broader strategy adopted by companies to in meeting commitments around sustainability and corporate social responsibility agenda (for example, with the implementation of fairtrade standards on specific commodity lines).

A global manufacturer stakeholder suggested that their policy of using 3rd party certification schemes complements existing government policy on the potential of certification schemes as a tool to implement higher sustainable and development related standards:

> 'I like the Department for International Development (UK) position on this, which they explained as part of 20 year food vision earlier in year which was just to try and encourage business companies to meet highest possible standards and to come to market with products that meet those standards whether it be Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade to try and make it as mainstream as possible'

Organisations, which operate certification schemes, are considered to have the expertise on particular aspects of social, ethical and environmental aspects of supply chains. A stakeholder retailer expressed this:

> We rely quite heavily on 3rd party accredited we are the world's largest fairtrade retailer by value you know we see the value in being able to rely on 3rd party to accredit elements of the sustainability agenda because we are not, we put our hands up and admit we are not the experts and that as a retailer we are not in control of whole or parts of the supply chain and we need to look to accreditors to give us the assurance around some of the issues that we feel are important.

The benefits of using standards contained within schemes are not just realised by retailers and manufacturers. For some stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, certification and the standards associated with certification represented a method in which to promote a particular system of farming, for example, sustainable farming methods. Certification is used a way of 'driving our mission' of helping farmers to practise sustainable methods of farming. A non-governmental organisation representative explained (S#5):

> So really the logo means that the product comes from certified farms and we use certification as a way of driving our mission and it something that companies have very much embraced because it becomes, for a company, it becomes a 3rd party accreditation of what they actually doing and they may have been doing the right thing for many years but this helps how to talk about what we are doing on the ground and how to get the validation or endorsement of a third party.

For another NGO stakeholder (S#10) linked with a certification scheme, the logo and label aspect of their activities was considered to an effective tool in changing conditions for producers in developing countries. They said:

> If you just see yourself as being a label then you are probably quite limited and I think we never set out just to label products, we always saw labelling as one tool of our kind of wider work of raising awareness and debating fair trade and as at the same time see what we can do practically to get trade working a little bit better for producer communities in the global south

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Most importantly however, and as the previous stakeholder quote suggests, logos and labels are rarely created until an organisation has agreed on the standards and aims underpinning it. Thus, the origins of organisations that subsequently develop certification schemes and logos are an important consideration in understanding what they seek to signal.

2.2.3 Reactive transparency: communicating beyond the logo

The required levels of reassurance from actors within the food supply chain alter, and are dependent on how food issues are discussed and represented in broader society. A quote from this stakeholder(S#1), an assurance scheme owner, illustrates that at times, the appearance of critical influences, such as probing about particular farming processes and practices from NGOs and CSOs necessitates communication to consumers that goes beyond the logo and draws directly on standards.

> 'Because although we have some facility to communicate to consumers to make them feel comfortable and warm about current standards, there are other influences who are saying that this is not good enough, that is not good enough. And that feeds back to us and we have to shift our standards forward and feed our communication and say we have responded to that'

The creation of and subsequent compliance of standards enables some stakeholders to adopt a defensive position, in particular, where situations of 'crisis' transparency occur. Such situations occur when particular practices or claims are challenged. Consequently a system of standards protects and ensures credibility with the highlighting or citing of particular standards. For example one stakeholder (S#1) said that in response to discussions regarding pesticide use in farming, they are able to respond to public debate by 'saying that fruit and vegetables coming from our system are safe to eat because of X and X standard. And there is laboratory testing done routinely to demonstrate this outcome.' Consequently standards themselves are used to add to credibility of the information shared in communication and signal information beyond the logo itself.

Situations change however, and the level of transparency can move from signals linked to assurance to communication which has a greater depth of information and is more precise. Stakeholder #1 illustrated this by referring to their experience of a national newspaper reporting on meat production and halal.

> This is what we are trying to do except if daily newspaper runs something tomorrow, for example, on halal , which they did a couple of weeks ago , and misinforms the hell out of people then we start to get detailed questions. The level of detail and the level of questions that people are suddenly starting to ask about our system changes over night and shifts a gear and we have then to be in a position to provide very specific answers to very specific questions.

Certification schemes and the methods that underpin them prove to be an effective way to respond to information challenges because 'We believe that within that technical scope that we have that we have got to answer any question that bears on that,'(stakeholder #1).

Consequently, the scheme becomes 'a communication tool of the industry'. A recent example of the certification schemes' role in communicating on behalf of the industry was the news regarding salmonella presence in Spanish eggs. The scheme owner was able to use the standards within the scheme:

> 'It [set of standards] enabled us to say this does not happen here because we have this, this and this control why would you want to buy your eggs from Spain when you can buy our eggs.'

> Stakeholder #1

2.2.4 Stakeholder cooperation and signals

In order to effectively signal information to consumers, stakeholder accounts reveal the importance of cooperation and alignment in sending of signals to consumers. Strategies of alignment, in which a common approach is developed around the signalling of specific types of information aims to prevent lessen confusion experienced by some consumers. Consensus and collaboration feature as an approach to signalling messages to consumers. Stakeholder #2 expressed how they 'work closely with supermarkets to ensure we are aligned in terms of providing additional information to consumers' because 'there is a big push to make sure there is some consistency of messages around particular times and around particular themes'. Examples of this include *Fairtrade Fortnight* and the *Food for Life* public health campaign[9].

Certification schemes were cited as opportunities, which created partnerships and cooperation in signalling to consumers as suggested by this assurance scheme owner stakeholder:

> We believe get a bit of reassurance from our logo and a lot of reassurance from   the Tesco brand or retailer brand and if you put them together they are synergistic.

> Stakeholder #1

Stakeholder#10 explained the importance of ensuring that certification schemes and their representative logos do not to displace the products' own brand. One example of this is located in fairtrade in which product coverage has significantly increased in recent years. In

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[9] *Fairtrade Fortnight* is a campaign event that runs annually in the UK. Primarily, *Fairtrade Fortnight* aims to increase awareness of fairtrade and celebrate fair and ethical trading. The *Food for Life* public health campaign is based on a network of schools , communities and food charities seeking to change food culture in the UK.

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order for a logo to become mainstream, according to one retailer stakeholder (S#9), it is
important to ensure that the logo is 'not the brand of the product'. Stakeholder#9explained
this further, using fair trade products as an example. They said:

> I don't think there is a single brand in the UK market where the fair trade mark
> overwhelms the brand of the product and I think that is very important in terms of
> mainstreaming because if we want there to be 4000 products then they can't
> differentiate purely on the basis of fair trade anymore. If there are 800 brands
> fairtrade coffee out there, each brand has to stand for something and not just
> fairtrade because they can't live or die on being fairtrade.

Moreover, the widespread adoption of an independent certification scheme which focuses
on a specific signal forces retailers and manufactures to look for new ways to differentiate
themselves, their brand and their food products. One way in which retailers and
manufacturers might achieve this differentiation is a focus on the quality or price of a
product. Another, as described by this retailer stakeholder, is the extent of which a practice
is adopted, for example, fair trade.

> It actually helps if Sainsbury's and Tesco's carries the fairtrade label too because it
> gives the consumers a reference point, we just want to say that we do better so all
> our coffee and tea is fairtrade and that other supermarket might be 10%, so because
> it is fairtrade you have a reference point between their 10% and your 100%.

Reflections of certification schemes by stakeholders reveal how certification schemes offer a
range of benefits, including as a tool to signal information to consumers and to businesses.
Independent 3rd party schemes were rated highly as a tool in which to verify processes and
practices and thus strengthen signal quality. Moreover, such schemes were highlighted as
playing an important role in meeting the goals of NGOs, retailers and manufacturers.
Cooperation between scheme owners and retailers and manufacturers with the alignment
of messages sent to consumers was a further practice identified by stakeholders.

2.3 Weaknesses and challenges

This section reports stakeholders' perception of the challenges of signalling information to
consumers and the weaknesses of certification schemes in addressing these challenges.
Focus is placed on the complexity surrounding consumers' understanding of food and the
limited range of commodities certified by some certification schemes. In addition, the use of
own brand omni-labels and, retailer and manufacturer-led standards are discussed. Finally,
issues raised by specific signals are explored from a stakeholder perspective.

The effectiveness of logos and certification schemes is dependent on a particular
commodity and consumers' understanding of it. For example a global manufactures (S#2)
said that with some commodities 'it is blindingly obvious to consumers what they are, so for
example, tea. It is just dried tea leaves'. Whereas with palm oil for example, it is unclear
because it has multiple functions and its presence may not be clear for consumers, for

example it is 'used as fuel in cars, tiny quantities in shampoo, [and in] margarine so it does not melt in boot of peoples' cars'. Consequently, this influences how the stakeholder communicates to consumers about palm oil:

> Because we use in it in so many products, we have taken the view that we should talk about it from a corporate perspective.

A piecemeal approach to certification and commodities is inevitable, in particular where certification is linked to improving the sustainability of farming practices or implementing policies fair trade. A certification scheme owner (S#5) suggested that for certification scheme owners the prospect of having only one certified ingredient in a multi-ingredient product, such as a chocolate bar, might create opportunities for change in the practices surrounding other commodities. She said:

> At the same time we are communicating with the consumer that it is the cocoa in that chocolate bar that is certified and we would rather really have someone have that with cocoa and be really working hard on the other commodities, and have some firm commitment on cocoa because the impact of that is enormous   and you can't wait for everything at the same time, as long as they have a plan, as long as they are working on something or with other schemes then we will be happy having our seal on that pack.

A single based logo, signalling one key message is considered effective if it is well recognised and distinct. However, this creates a further challenge in that consumers' expectation of may not be met by one singular certification scheme. This was the experience of a stakeholder (S#10) who represented a global certification scheme.

> 'I think the other thing is that all of these labels offer very distinct propositions   and I think the other challenge is that people expect these labels to deliver miracles, so you kind of say you know, you get all sorts of feedback, like why doesn't the label guarantee the quality of the product or why can't we do something about the amount of packaging that fruit comes in, but you kind of say, well you know, these are not the decisions for us to make but for retailers and manufacturers know best how to manage their product, but of course we hope that our label will be part of a suite of interventions that a company is making. But we don't kind ourselves for a minute that we are the magic bullet to every problem that afflicts global supply chains'.

One potential remedy to this is the implementation of an omni-label scheme. An omni label seeks to provide consistent information on more than one information area. One working example can be drawn from the global retailer Royal Ahold. For own brand products, Royal

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Ahold, have developed a type of own brand omni-label scheme which covers 5 main areas: *biologisch, fairtrade, duurzame vagst, scharrelvleen* and *ecologisch*[10].

So far, however, the development and implementation of omni-labels have lacked the credibility held by single-issue independent labels. Moreover, as one stakeholder suggested, the development of omni-labels does not account for the trade-offs that occur during food production. Arguably they do however provide consumers an overall picture on a range of issues linked to their product. Ultimately however consumers will have to make the choice and any necessary 'trade off' themselves.

While logos that represent certification schemes are mostly considered effective, the standards which certification schemes rely upon are, for some, recognised as an increasing burden for producers. This is because some producers are certified across a range of different schemes. One stakeholder, who represented a social and ethical certification scheme, said that greater collaboration between schemes was required to reduce the burden. Moreover, the stakeholder gave one example of how they were developing a method of collecting information about carbon impacts alongside their existing information requirements. They said:

> So at that level, there needs to be a good collaboration. So we are looking to see if we can offer producers a carbon assessment alongside their audit because producers are being asked if they have done one, and if they have that data available but also and more importantly from our perspective is, if producers are going to need to adapt to climate change. A carbon assessment might be a useful tool for them in looking where they might be adapting.

Finally, one stakeholder with a background in retail raised a practical issue relating to the design of packaging. According to them, the processes of pack design and redesign may take a substantial amount of time and affect the implementation a system of signalling. Moreover, 'there is a tension to add things to packaging and then every now and then a big cycle of clearing things off and making it clearer, simpler and easier for consumers to read the packs etc.'

2.3.1 Key challenges around specific signals

The challenge around signalling successfully to consumers may be dependent on the type of information and signal that retailers and manufactures seek to communicate to consumers. In the rest of this section we discuss specific signals and the ease or problem encountered by stakeholders in transmitting them to consumers. Not all of the areas covered in the project were raised by the stakeholders, for example, few stakeholders discussed the challenges regarding signalling information around nutrition and dietary related health.

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[10] The terms in Dutch broadly mean the following: pure and honest, fairtrade, sustainably caught (referring to fish), animal welfare, and organic. The first and last two terms 'pure and honest' and 'organic' are sometimes in the Dutch language interchangeable.

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2.3.2 Food safety

A key difficulty with signalling food safety is, according to an assurance scheme owner (S#1), the absence of competitiveness between food providers. This is, in their opinion, a result of the position taken by DG Sanco. The stakeholder summed up the DG Sanco position as one in which 'no one should be competing on food safety because all foods are safe'. Consequently, a certification scheme that seeks to assure about standards and safety represents a 'platform', which is 'precompetitive', and one that 'everybody needs to be on otherwise people lose confidence in the industry'.

2.3.3 Origin and provenance: responding to policy anomaly?

Different rules regarding labelling of origin for different meat products has created a policy anomaly on origin labelling. Consequently, certification schemes have some influence and have the potential in being an effective mechanism to overcoming the legislative 'gaps'. One stakeholder explained how this was overcome by changing the standards in the certification scheme. They said:

> The primary producer is not happy with that [rules on origin labelling] because I mean, take the example that everyone uses, it means that if you bring pork in from Poland, and the produce bacon in a factory in Norfolk it is labelled British bacon because it is produced in a factory in Norfolk and there is a school of thought that is misleading to consumers and if you call something British bacon then the expectation will be that the pigs came from Britain. So we have established our own rules on that and if our label has a union flag in it, it was farmed in Britain and it was processed. So we have been very clear on that for ten years and will continue to cut through the fog with that until we are made redundant on that point because someone clarifies the legislation. But we are not holding our breath.

Recently, the British Retail Consortium and meat retailers and manufacturers have made moves towards greater consistency in the area of origin labelling with a voluntary agreement. Supported by the UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), a voluntary code that sets out the principles of origin labelling for processed meats have been agreed[11].

2.3.4 Environment and sustainability

Key challenges around signals relating to environment and sustainability include: the complexity surrounding the issues, lack of agreed methodologies which inform standards and certification and the range of sub-issues which come under the umbrella of this broad signal. Examples of the types of information that may be categorised under environment

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[11]http://www.meatinfo.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/11887/Meat_country_of_origin_labelling_principles_agreed.html accessed 13/12/2010

and sustainability relate to the following: biodiversity and farmland management, carbon footprint labelling, organic production and sustainable sourcing practices. The numerous issues and the complexity create challenges for stakeholders who are implementing environmental and sustainability related standards and practices in their food supply chains. One UK retailer stakeholder expressed this:

> I think that is the challenge that we have the tension between, we are doing all this stuff, and we want to tell consumers but they are not ready to know about it because some of the issues are so complex, so how do you get across the complexity of palm oil, fish stocks and so on, how do you get across the complexity of some of those things?

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of taking account of the unevenness of progress and development of sustainable food chains in signalling information to consumers. For one in particular, a UK retailer, third party certification schemes are vital in offering an understandable method in which to communicate to consumers. In the example quoted below, the retailer-stakeholder perceives established independent 3rd party certification schemes as a useful and effective tool of communication. For them, such schemes are easily utilised for communication purposes compared to their own systems of standards relating to sustainability.

> We have our own internal processes to move species and fisheries from a red rating which is a poor rating to a green rating which is a good rating, but obviously we can't communicate that customers so easily as we would require it would explain what it meant and there it would open us up more to scrutiny which is why there is not that third party element to it which is why we look at MSc to underpin or support our own principles.

The strategy of choosing when to communicate effective sustainable food chain practices reflects the complexity of both practices and signalling in this area. This gives rise to a piecemeal approach in which sustainable practices are gradually implemented over time and commodity type. According to one certification scheme owner stakeholder however, third party certification schemes have a role in leading the moves by retailers, producers and manufacturers towards sustainable food. For them, making commitments on one commodity, such as cocoa, will create need to 'have to look at what else is going on in your supply chain'. Thus, 'sustainability is a journey, [it is] not a destination'.

2.3.5 Animal welfare

Signals about animal welfare can be transmitted via mandatory labelling as well as through logos underpinned by certification schemes. Signals linked to animal welfare seek to provide assurance about the welfare of animals at all relevant stages: farming, transport and slaughter. Signalling is important because consumers are unable to verify at the point of sale that animal welfare protection has been maintained in the process and production of food.

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Mandatory legislation exists in this area; for example, legislation on egg marketing governs
how EU egg producers are required to label eggs sold to consumers[12]. The labelling of eggs
signals to consumers the type of production system used by producers. The labelling
scheme is thus based on the presumed welfare outcomes of each production method.

One stakeholder claimed that while mandatory regulation on the labelling of the farming
method used in the production of eggs has been 'immensely helpful' in allowing consumers
to make choices on an informed basis, there were still considerable room for improvement
to make the legislation more effective. For example, animal welfare was also cited as one
example of where transparency has played a role in transforming specific commodity and
food markets. This stakeholder (S#4) representing a NGO uses the example of labelling on
egg packs to show how free-range eggs have moved from a niche market to the
mainstream.

> 'There has clearly been an increase since the labelling of egg packs came back in
> 2004. In many parts of Europe, particular in eight or nine of the northern countries,
> there has been huge increase, and in the UK by now, half the value at retail value is
> of non-caged eggs. It has gone quickly from being a niche market to having a big
> market share and I am absolutely clear that transparency is a part of that.

Mandatory labelling, in the opinion of the NGO stakeholder (S#4) has proved successful, but
nonetheless a cautious view is required. In particular, the stakeholder suggested that the
main message communicated about farming systems on egg packs were potentially diluted
and less effective when set alongside marketing messages and imagery. They said:

> If indeed, anything, one is getting, whatever the opposite of transparency is, and one
> is getting elements of dishonesty. I mean just to give one example, not here but in
> other European countries we are finding that egg packs that might have the right
> wording on but also have a picture on the pack of battery eggs of free range eggs.
> Even if not the hens, even if a rural traditional outdoor scene, what you are
> communicating to consumers is that these are outdoor eggs not battery.

This represents a form of counter transparency and questions assumptions of the
effectiveness of mandatory labelling enacted in regulations in signalling to consumers.

Key to what is perceived as having made a difference is the identification of factory or
battery farming style farming (in the production of eggs) on the eggs packs. Identification of
such forms of farming often remain absent in the current labelling system of meat and
dairy, instead only perceived better systems are indicated via logos and labels and
certification schemes. The NGO stakeholder(s#4) proposed that 'the mechanisms of logo

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[12] *Council Directive 1999/74/EC* lays down the minimum standards of welfare for laying hens and *Council
Regulation 1028/2006/EC* and *Commission Regulation 557/2007/EC* sets out the rules for marketing eggs and
the measures for implementation.

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and labelling to indicate farming systems linked to animal welfare should be extended from egg production to dairy and meat products such as pig meat. In particular, this would involve revealing to the consumer 'how that animal has lived, how it was reared'.

The practice of food safety was felt to conflict with some of the standards linked to animal welfare. For example, this stakeholder(s#1) representing a certification scheme which promotes products that have met a range of product assurance standards discusses how some threats, such as avian bird flu can contradict farming practices linked to higher animal welfare standards because the poultry are required to be kept indoors during an outbreak. Giving more detail, the stakeholder explained:

> 'It is not just a single issue; the issue that we deal with food safety and animal welfare can sometimes be in conflict. The biggest pressure on us is to improve food safety from government is to improve food safety standards in chickens…. Yet the lobby group pressure and they don't even understand the food safety issue. And there are two conflicts because what we are being asked by the food standards agency to lock the doors, don't let anyone in, don't let any rats, vermin, mice, birds, flies, - ultimate bio security. And you can't get that with free range'.

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3 STAKEHOLDERS AND SIGNALS AND MANAGEMENT

This report has outlined a range of perspectives from stakeholders, which reveal the strengths and weaknesses of using certification schemes and their associated logos to signal information to consumers. Retailer and manufacturer stakeholders, in particular, discussed the challenge they face in signalling to consumers. This consisted primarily of responding to the complexity of some signals, for example, around sustainability and the environmental impacts of foods and having to maintain a balance in the provision of information. This balance has to ensure that enough information is available to consumers yet not overload consumers with too many signals and information. This section of the report focuses on the management of signals and information discussed by stakeholders to overcome these challenges.

3.1 Information-editing

Responding to the challenges (identified above) requires different degrees of 'information' editing. Information editing in this context refers to the use, presentation and accessibility of information and how stakeholders edit that information.

In particular, one stakeholder reflected on how standards organisations, such as certification scheme owners potentially have a significant role to play in information editing. Moreover, information editing is necessary in order to make the information accessible and the signal robust. This stakeholder discusses this in the context of information relating to sustainability.

> Another aspect of it is choice editing and there is still a role for stakeholders in this because the information without choice editing, or categorisation or taxonomies of sustainability which categorise and organise the data would make it useless in a lot of cases and for most people's purposes. So there is a strong role for standards organisation and their stakeholder networks to shape and present the data and give it a stamp to make it meaningful and worth communicating.
>
> Stakeholder #3

Information -editing need not relate only to the consumer. For example, for some farmers who meet the standards set by the certification scheme, there is a desire to see greater communication with consumers about their farming practices. In this way, the scheme becomes a mediator, having to select which information is appropriate for consumers. Often this is decided on consumers' perceived level of interest in receiving and knowing that information. Two stakeholders who are each involved with certification schemes particularly emphasised this point. Stakeholder #1 representing a certification scheme said:

> 'So this is one problem we have on doing this job effectively on behalf of farmers because farmers are really close to what they have to do to meet our standards   to

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> meet the standards of the retailers and therefore cannot understand why we are not
> putting out really detailed information about the welfare of chicken, or info on
> pesticides. And the reason we don't do that is that consumers are just not
> interested, and we know that because we sit down and do focus groups with them,
> 99% per cent they are interested in some level of reassurance that someone is
> looking after stuff on their behalf and they can feed it to their children'.

In order to be effective, signals sent to consumers via the food products they purchase,
according to one retailer stakeholder, have to be part of the 'story' of that product and
therefore be relevant.

Information editing is required because, according to retailers, too much information to
consumers can be a burden. An approach to negate the tension between too much and too
little information and ensure signals are effective, according to one retailer stakeholder,
have to be part of the 'story' of that product. A 'story' comprises of a chosen number of
information areas chosen by the retailer, brought together in a coherent way and one that
is perceived to be relevant.

> You pick three things, you are going to tell people about the health issues with it ,
> because threat is legal you have to tell them that about salts, fats and sugars and
> frankly I put that in my body so I really want to know that information , second, you
> are going to tell people about the packaging because you are going to be left with
> the packaging problem , and you might tell me all about the Amazon , but I am stuck
> here with the packaging and I need to know what to do , and then the third tertiary
> level is that you might be left with space to tell about where the product came from ,
> the sourcing story , so I have got a ready meal , I could tell you about the spuds and
> the fish, but I will probably tell you about the fish story or free range eggs in a
> quiche. So we will pick the most relevant story but not all of it.

> Stakeholder #8

In part, the pressure to provide all aspects of information around a particular food product
can be lessened by choice editing. Choice editing refers to "pre-selecting the particular
range of products and services available to consumers"[13]. For example, if a retailer
implements a policy of only selling free range eggs and commits to using only free range
eggs in all of their products, (including read-meals etc) there is less pressure to explicitly
signal this information to the consumers directly on the product. Similarly, if a retailer stocks
only fair trade tea or coffee or bananas, there is less pressure to emphasise this directly on
the product itself. One major retailer explained how choice editing, as part of a brand
promise, might lead to requirement for less rather than more information signalled to
consumers via a specific product.

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[13] Sustainable Consumption Roundtable (2006) *I will if you will: Towards sustainable consumption*. London:
National Consumer Council and Sustainable Development Commission.

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Information –editing, so what we say is that people cannot respond to it all. And that takes you onto this next point which is choice editing, you can only buy fairtrade tea and coffee from us and we only use free range eggs so in a way you don't need a label on the product because our brand promise is that all our eggs are free range

<div align="right">

Grocery Retailer - Stakeholder #8

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When we went 100% fairtrade on bananas, we knew what it meant but probably a handful of customers knew what it meant but the point is that all of our customer are buying fairtrade, whether they know it or not, whether they care or not. So its delivering sustainability by stealth and the fair trade logo happens to be a part of that journey to sustainability.

<div align="right">

Retailer-Stakeholder #9

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3.2 'Guardian' and 'Gatekeeper'

A further key challenge is the limited space afforded on food packs and labelling itself. This has resulted in the development of two approaches to signalling information to consumers which can be summed up as 'guardian' and 'gatekeeper' approaches. Each of these approaches help retailers and manufacturers to overcome the limitations of on-pack labelling in signalling information to consumers. A guardian approach is one adopted by retailers who seek to provide 'reassurance' or 'assurance' to consumers by assuming a position in which they suggest to consumers – 'Let us manage the complexity and you trust'. One stakeholder, a organisation focusing on standard systems in certification schemes, referred to a leading own brand UK food retailer an example of a retailer possessing this approach. The stakeholder suggested that:

'The 'Name of Company 'approach is to tell consumers that 'they are doing all they can but don't worry about because if you shop here you are doing the right thing'.

<div align="right">

Stakeholder #3

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Such an approach is partly linked to understanding the level of information consumers wish to know. For example, stakeholder #1, a global manufacturer made a similar point:

'Yes so we know that our day-to-day communication is a bit of a pat on the head: 'do not worry, everything is fine' '

In the absence of certification schemes for a specific commodity or one that is from a particular geographical location, retailers and manufacturers may develop their own standards. These may or may not be communicated to the consumer. Examples of this

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include the Good Agricultural Practice Guidelines[14] programme recently launched by
Unilever which built on their commitment to the Sustainable Agriculture Programme[15].
While not available on the product, information about the programme is available on the
stakeholders' website. 'Plan A', developed by Marks and Spencer's reflects a similar
approach in which a whole organisation reviews its activities and commitments to supply
chain operations and seeks to communicate the results on a regular basis[16]. There is a move
by such companies to build into their whole corporate brand strategy types of supply chain
controls that suggest to the public that the company is doing the right thing. That is, the
company is automatically identified as being responsible about its food supply. In the case
of "Plan A" this goes to the heart of the procurement principles of the company along all of
its supply chain.

A 'gatekeeper' approach is one in which the provision is made of opportunities for
consumers to find out information at a post-purchase stage. Thus, the product and the
contact information stated on the product represents a starting point and gateway from
which consumers can access more detailed information about aspects of the product. This is
partly because, according to Stakeholder #2, of the need to 'be realistic to target consumers
and just give them opportunities, once they have made their purchase decision to get more
information.' Part of the motivation to provide consumers with post-purchase opportunities
to find information was linked to the perception and understanding that 'buying decisions
on supermarkets is relatively quick and short'. Such an approach enables stakeholders such
as retailers and manufacturers to overcome the limitations of space constraints of labelling.

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[14] http://www.unilever.com/images/sd_Unilever_Sustainable_Agriculture_Code_2010_tcm13-216557.pdf
accessed 13/12/2010
[15] http://www.unilever.com/sustainability/environment/agriculture/approach/ accessed 13/12/2010
[16] http://plana.marksandspencer.com/about/the-plan accessed 13/12/2010

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4 BEST PRACTICE ALTERNATIVES

This section highlights areas of best practice alternatives that are not label-based.

4.1 Non-label information provision

Certification schemes and their logos represent one method of communicating to
consumers. For example, stakeholder #2 explained that certification schemes are part of a
wider repertoire of communication tools – some of which are not based on the label.

> 'Consumers spend relatively small amount of time looking at the product in the store
> and we have a lot of information to get a lot of our packs, ingredients and marketing
> information too. So those packs can be quite crowded. So I think it's about being
> very careful about our communication and being very clear but also that consumers
> do have the ability to find our more'.

Stakeholder #2 highlighted the role of non-label methods of information provision to
consumers.

> 'We have our website, we have our phone lines, which people can phone and get a
> whole range of information, for example if they are interested in an issue or any
> particular aspect of the product. Our care line has a resident nutritionist on hand and
> our nutritionist helps to train our care line advisors.'

In addition, it is possible to 'get specific advice on allergy and if you are not sure if it is in a
product'. For stakeholder #2 the provision of care lines and on the pack phone numbers
made information accessible to people. This was revealed further by '½ million calls on care
line in UK, of which complaints were 30% and advice 70%'. This, according to the
stakeholder provided the consumer with a 'useful way to get specific information about
products' and offered an opportunity for the company to receive views and feedback on
products from consumers. Information provision at the point of sale, in store and on leaflets
was also emphasised by retail stakeholders.

An NGO stakeholder who operates a sustainable farming certification scheme said a key
challenge for them was communicating effectively on a relatively small budget. For this
NGO, funds allocated for advertising and marketing of the certification scheme and logo
were limited. This emphasises the importance of a) engaging with CSOs and b) cooperation
with retailers and manufacturers to promote the NGO and raise awareness of the food
available branded with their logo.

4.2 Future of transparency, signals and certification schemes

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Many of the stakeholders commented on the potential role that technology in transmitting signals to consumers. Technology, in the form of handheld barcode readers and web-based phone applications, were held by stakeholders as a potential solution to the limitation afforded of space found in existing labelling practices

> If a consumer wants to know more, in the aisle of the supermarket, using smart phones, or pulling back a label the consumer should be able to learn more. The vision I have that should be fairly free information and you could reach back and see the people who have picked the oranges you have bought. Produce traceability initiative should be possible to see from to the crate level of product.

As the quote above indicates, traceability becomes an essential part of transparency and signalling when it is facilitated by technology. Such methods of signalling messages and information to consumers have begun to emerge. For example, a certification scheme known as Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) have implemented 'LEAF Tracks' – a programme designed to allow consumers to locate more information about their LEAF certified food. Users are advised to input the product number into a dedicated website which hosts the database of LEAF members. Interestingly, the scope of information revealed is largely decided by the producer who is permitted to edit the information available. Thus, users may locate a minimal amount of information, such as location of production and the type of farm or, in other cases, may access more biographic information about the farmer and other activities undertaken on the farm[17]. This form of information is however only available once the product has been purchased by the consumer[18]. For the stakeholder (S#6) below however, the use of technology to provide post-purchase information is not necessarily a problem. They said:

> Yes, I think a lot of the views are that you put a link on the packaging or the promotional material and ask people to look online, because if you are going to look online you are going to make time to sit down and read it and you can offer more information, a bit more detail and you can offer links to accreditation services or partnerships that you are working with. So I think yes, that is something that is very useful, so whether it is through a laptop or pc at home or an app. This will be the way forward.

Technology may utilise information developed for the purposes of traceability and in doing so provide greater transparency for consumers about their food purchases. Technology-led initiatives in this area potentially can overcome the limitation of space as information about products will no longer be stored on the product itself but accessed using a code via a website or handheld device. Key problems remain however. Firstly, consumers still require

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[17] For more information, the website is here
http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/consumers/theLEAFmarquecons/whoproducesit.eb (accessed 13/12/2010)
[18] Care Trace is a further example of an organisation, which seeks to tell consumers the story of a product, and relies on barcode technology and the Internet to do so. http://www.caretrace.com/index.aspx (accessed 13/12/2010)

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an effective basis on which to compare products and secondly, consumers make purchasing decisions in considerably short amounts of time. Thus, while the potential of technology is recognised, it is not with confidence that one can assume that consumers will be able to digest and respond the greater amounts of information that such technology will enable access to – especially during rather than after purchasing.

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5 CONCLUSIONS

This report has focused upon food supply chain stakeholders' (retailers, manufacturers, producers & certification schemes) perceptions and experiences of signally information about food to consumers. The food supply chain stakeholders include producers, manufacturers, retailers, certification schemes and NGOs. In particular, the stakeholders' perceptions of the strengths and weakness of signals based on certification schemes such as logos have been explored. This has led to assessing what additional methods and practices are used to transmit information to consumers about food. How these alternative approaches are enacted, for example, by corporate social responsibility agendas, in-store campaigns and brand management were covered in the previous sections.

Retailers and manufacturers are among many of the stakeholders within this report who have the task of signalling information to consumers. The key challenges around signalling information to consumers faced by stakeholders include: the minimal time spent by consumers during food purchase, the minimal space afforded by the physical label on food products and the complexity that exist behind some signals.

Certification schemes are a useful tool to communicate signals both business-to-business and business to consumer. In particular, the logo provides an everyday assurance to consumers. In situations where greater levels of assurance are required, stakeholders such as certification scheme owners, rely on the citation of standards to provide precise information regarding practices and processes of production. The third party role of certification schemes and their auditing processes provide a form of external legitimacy for the offerings by manufacturers and retailers to their customers.

Signals are diverse and in this report, the signal areas identified included: Food safety and food quality, for example, composition, nutrition and health; food integrity, for example, origin, environment process production methods and impacts, ethical and social, for example, animal welfare, fair trade and, cultural and social signals.

Some information areas are challenging for stakeholders to communicate simply and clearly to consumers. Key signals discussed in this report included: food safety, origin, environment process production methods and impacts, animal welfare, fair trade. While the complexities surrounding the methodology and different approaches to environment related signals were cited as a challenge by some stakeholders, others placed more emphasis on the potential of signal conflict, as in the case of food safety and animal welfare.

The stakeholders featured in this report did not consider the development of omni-labels as a means to overcome the complexity of signalling a set of diverse information sets an effective response. A key consideration was the potential lowering of standards to enable omni-labels to encompass a multiple criterion.

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Instead, stakeholders stressed the importance of gaining a balance between too much and too little information provision to the consumers. Practical considerations, such as the limited space afforded on packaging, time constraints experienced by consumers and the need to reduce the potential for consumer confusion were reasons cited by stakeholders for the importance of clear and consistent signalling. Recognition was also made however of the diversity of consumer's information needs and consumers' 'right to know' about their real or potential food purchases.

While the use of certification schemes and their associated logo were held by stakeholders to assist in the management of the signalling and information provision, a broader strategy adopted by stakeholders, termed here as 'information editing', featured in the management of signals. Information editing refers to the use, presentation and accessibility of information and how stakeholders edit and translate that information. For example, the presentation of information as a story may allow for coherence and compatibility around signalling and thus negate the confusion and tension created from too much information. Choice-editing with the broader messages displayed in-store was a further measure considered to overcome challenges of information provision. Non-label methods of signalling were emphasised as an important method of ensuring good communicative practice with consumers. Examples include the provision of post-purchase information available on websites and telephone care lines.

The future of product based information and signalling may witness an increase in the use of technology, such as hand held devices that recognise product barcodes and use RFID. This will also make greater use of traceable information.

In conclusion, stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of signalling information to consumers reveal much about food transparency. Firstly, transparency concerning food involves significantly different types of information and signals linked to: food safety, food quality and food integrity. The scope of information given and the subsequent signalling creates a significant challenge for those involved in communicating to consumers.

Secondly, and most significantly, transparency enacted by stakeholders represented in this report is enacted through processes of information and signal management. The extent to which this responds to and fulfils definitions of transparency in terms 'accessibility' can be questioned. The role of food chain stakeholders as 'information editors' and brokers is important and needs to be acknowledged in the review of the state of current food transparency.

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Appendix 1 List of certification schemes and their associate logos

Certification Scheme	Primary Aims	Secondary Aims	Signals: Logo	Source of Signal
Assured Food Standards Incorporating: - Assured Dairy Scheme - Assured Combinable Crop -Assured Chicken - Assured Produce - Assured British Pigs – Assured British Meat -Quality British Turkey - Potato Assurance	Food safety	Origin (traceability) Standards are wide ranging and include food safety, traceability, animal health and welfare, and environmental protection		http://www.ndfas.org.uk/ http://www.assuredcrops.co.uk/crops/home.eb http://www.assuredchicken.org.uk/chickens/ http://www.assuredproduce.co.uk/ap/ http://www.assuredpigs.co.uk/pigs/ http://www.abm.org.uk/abm/default.aspx http://www.britishturkey.co.uk/ http://www.potato.org.uk/index.html
Laid in Britain	Food Safety Origin (traceability)	Regional and local origin		http://www.laidinbritaineggs.co.uk/index.htm
Lion Eggs	Food Safety Origin (traceability)			http://lioneggs.co.uk/page/lionmark
FEMAS (Feed Materials Assurance Scheme)	Food safety			no website
Eblex	Quality (organoleptic) Origin Food Safety Traceability			http://www.simplybeefandlamb.co.uk/

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Certification Scheme	Primary Aims	Secondary Aims	Signals: Logo	Source of Signal
Quality Assured Farmed Venison	Origin Quality (organoleptic) Food safety	Economic and Environmental Sustainability		http://www.fedfa.com/quality.htm
Quality Meat Scotland	Origin Quality	Standards and aims are specific to production stage(s)		http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/
Linking Environment and Farming	Environmental Production Process Method - Integrated farm Management	Origin(Traceability)		http://www.leafuk.org/leafuk/
Organic Food Federation	Environmental Production Process Method -Organic			http://www.orgfoodfed.com/index.html
Organic Milk for Life	Production Process Method - Organic Animal welfare	Quality		http://www.omsco.co.uk/index.cfm/e/about.home
Soil Association	Environmental Production Process Method -Organic	Animal Welfare Ethical Trade (label in development)		http://www.soilassociation.org/
Carbon Trust Label	Environment - Reducing Carbon Footprint			http://www.carbon-label.com/business/label.htm

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Certification Scheme	Primary Aims	Secondary Aims	Signals: Logo	Source of Signal
Marine Stewardship Council	Environment Natural Resource Management (sustainable fish stocks, environmental impact) *does not include farmed fish	Origin (boat to plate traceability)		http://www.msc.org/
Vegetarian Society Approved	Social and Cultural (Dietary)	Animal Welfare (GMO free, Free range Eggs)		http://www.seedlingshowcase.com/corporate08/index.asp
Badatz Igud Rabbonim KIR	Social and Cultural (Dietary)			http://www.koshercertification.org.uk/
Halal Monitoring Committee	Social and Cultural (Dietary)			http://www.halalmc.net/halal_certification/overview.html
RSPCA Freedom Food	Animal Welfare (from birth to slaughter)	Origin		http://www.rspca.org.uk/freedomfood
Fairtrade	Equitable Trade	Labour conditions Economic and social/ community development Environmental		http://www.fairtrade.net/

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Certification Scheme	Primary Aims	Secondary Aims	Signals: Logo	Source of Signal
RainForest-Alliance	Environment -Natural resource management	Equitable Trade Community Development Labour conditions		http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/index.cfm
Traidcraft	Equitable Trade	Environment (less with production but more about seeking to lessen impact of their work)		http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/
Ethical Trading Initiative	Labour Conditions (in supply chains)			http://www.ethicaltrade.org/
GlobalGap	Production Standards (GAP) Food Safety			http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front_content.php?idcat=9

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Appendix 2 Table of stakeholders

Stakeholder Number	Description of stakeholder
S#1	Certification scheme owner (with producer and food chain focus)
S#2	Global manufacturer
S#3	Global accreditation organisation(of certification schemes)
S#4	CSO-NGO (animal welfare focus)
S#5	Certification scheme owner (sustainable-agriculture focus)
S#6	Independent consultant (retail experience)
S#7	Global retailer and industry led organisation (German-based)
S#8	UK Retailer
S#9	UK Retailer
S#10	Certification scheme owner (ethical and social focus)
S#11	Retailer and industry led organisation (Sweden)
S#12	Certification scheme owner (producer level focus)
S#13	Civil Society Organisation (consumer focus)

CONSORTIUM

Logo	Name	Country
	Department for Food and Resource Economics, University of Bonn **(UBO)**	Germany
	Kuratorium für Technik und Bauwesen in der Landwirtschaft e. V. **(KTBL)**	Germany
	Department of Food Biotechnology and Food Process Engineering, Technische Universität Berlin **(TUB)**	Germany
	The European Association for Food Safety **(SAFE)**	Belgium
	The Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology AB **(SIK)**	Sweden
	Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, University of Aarhus **(AU)**	Denmark
	Centre for Food Policy, City University London **(City)**	United Kingdom
	RLabs Market Research Ltd. **(RLabs)**	Greece
	Faculty of Bio-engineering, Department of Agricultural Economics, Ghent University **(Ugent)**	Belgium

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Campden BRI   Hungary
Magyarország
Nonprofit Kft **(CCH)**