

# Sugar content in breakfast cereals and yogurts – the Portuguese market baseline in order to design and promote healthy eating



Andreia Lopes Vargues; M. Graça Dias; Paulo Fernandes; Roberto Brazão; M. Antónia Calhau  
Food and Nutrition Department  
National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, IP  
1649-016 Lisboa  
andrea.vargues@insa.min-saude.pt

## Introduction

Scientific studies have related excessive sugar intake to chronic diseases, such as diabetes and obesity, leading several European countries, namely Nordic, United Kingdom and Ireland, to the development of initiatives towards public health. Portugal has defined an integrated strategy that encourages healthy eating (EIPAS) and aims for a major reduction of sugar intake. To accomplish this, monitoring sugar content in food is required.

## Objectives

Evaluate and compare sugar content in breakfast cereals and in solid and liquid yogurts, in Portugal and Ireland, focusing those near and below the goal established by EIPAS, for 2021.

## Methods

Nutritional evaluation was conducted in the labels of breakfast cereals and yogurts from Portuguese and Irish markets. Collected data were compared with EIPAS recommendations for sugar: 5 g/100 g for solids and 2.5 g/100 mL for liquids. [1]

As breakfast cereals are usually consumed with milk or yogurt, best and worst scenarios were created to show sugar content in these meals.

## Results

From 192 breakfast cereals results (100 PT and 92 IE), only 5 Portuguese versus 6 Irish comply with EIPAS. In 158 yogurts (152 PT and 6 IE), 19 solid yogurts from Portugal meet the requirements and none from Ireland. Concerning liquid yogurts, neither achieves the goals.

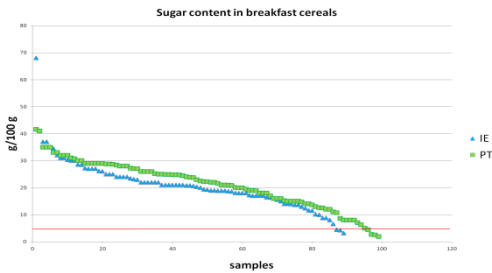


Fig. 1 – Sugar content in breakfast cereals.

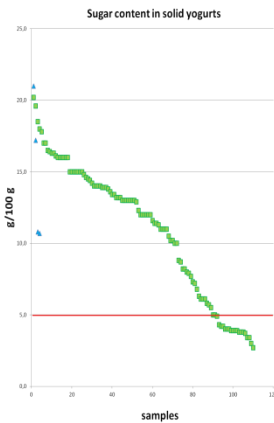


Fig. 2 – Sugar content in solid yogurts.

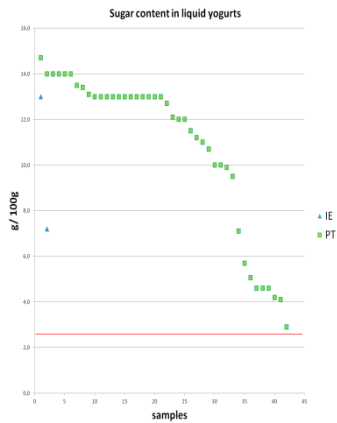


Fig. 3 – Sugar content in liquid yogurts.

Using mean values from Portugal, a meal composed by 30 g of breakfast cereals and 125 mL of milk contributes with 12.4 g of sugar. If composed with yogurt, sugar reaches 20.3 g.

Table 1 – Sugar content of breakfast cereals and milk or yogurt meals.

	Liquid yogurt (+)	Liquid yogurt (-)	Solid yogurt (+)	Solid yogurt (-)	Milk [2]
Breakfast cereals (+)	25.0 g/100 g (38.8 g/portion)	15.5 g/100 g (24.0 g/portion)	29.5 g/100 g (45.7 g/portion)	15.4 g/100 g (23.8 g/portion)	17.1 g/100 g (26.5 g/portion)
Breakfast cereals (-)	11.9 g/100 g (18.5 g/portion)	2.4 g/100 g (3.7 g/portion)	16.4 g/100 g (25.4 g/portion)	2.3 g/100 g (3.5 g/portion)	4.0 g/100 g (6.2 g/portion)

Green-color: compliance to the values established by EIPAS for 2021; red-color: non-compliance to the values established by EIPAS for 2021; portion: 30 g of breakfast cereals + 125 g of yogurt or 125 mL of milk. (-): minimum value for PT data; (+): maximum value for PT data.

## Conclusions

- ✓ Few products being around or below the requirements, may justify a joint intervention near representative associations of food industry, distribution and consumers to obtain an effective and consistent sugar reduction.
- ✓ Some breakfast cereals complied the values intended by EIPAS in 2021, in both countries. Besides, since some products with specific allegations are below the target values, sugar reduction seems possible. As for liquid yogurt, the target seems ambitious, as none comply the recommendations.
- ✓ Since children are a target audience for a large amount of breakfast cereals and yogurts, necessary measures should be taken for sugar reduction, contributing to the prevention of associated diseases and to improve public health.

## References

- [1] Diário da República (Portuguese Official Journal, 2nd serie, nr. 249, office nr. 11418/2017, the 29th December 2017.
- [2] – Tabela da Composição de Alimentos, 1ª edição, 2010.