

# COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES

## FOR TESTING DUAL QUALITY IN FOOD PRODUCTS





This project is co-funded by the Consumer Programme of the European Commission



# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE ECO PROJECT



“Dual quality is a practice in which companies use different recipes, formulations or standards for items sold under the same brand name and with very similar looking packaging”.

In the food sector, “dual quality” can be defined as **products sold under the same brand and with the same or very similar packaging, but with different ingredients and quality** depending on the European country where they were delivered.

Consumers from a number of EU countries have complained that **the composition of certain products, is different** in their home country when **compared to products sold under the same brand and with the same or very similar packaging** in other Member States.

In order to tackle this problem, the **ECO Project** (“Empowering Consumer Organisations”) was created.

The ECO project aims at limiting dual quality practices in food and **strengthening consumer organisations** in the EU and intends to strengthen the capacity of consumer organizations **to test food products** for dual quality, **disseminate test results** and **identify** and **report potential unfair practices**.

Our project wants to create a structure based on consumer organisations able to alert and **provide the relevant authorities**, at national and EU level, **with a full and accurate assessment on dual food quality in the EU**.



**By raising the awareness of the relevant authorities on this issue and by providing them with full and accurate information, our project will help to tackle this problem.**

# GOAL

This document is part of the training material that has been developed to help Consumer Organisations to take part to the ECO Project and to implement the testing campaign.

The written material is represented by:

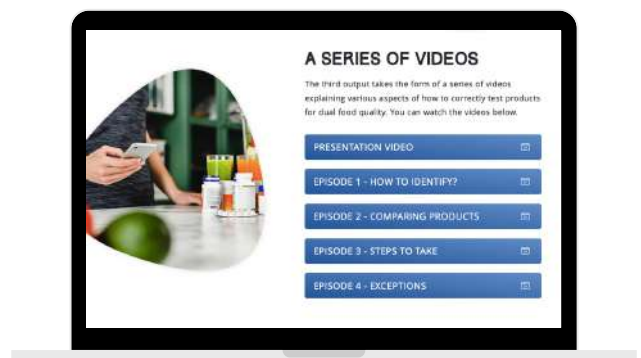


➔ These **three documents** are thought to be **complementary**: it will be possible to correctly organize and manage a testing campaign and contribute to the data sharing of the project by exploiting all the information they provide. **The latter document aims to provide tools**, such as suggestions and hints, **in order make the test campaign easier and effective**.

Other training material:

A **series of videos** has been developed to help Consumer Organisations to implement a testing campaign step by step. **Four episodes** are available explaining various aspects of the testing process to follow:

1. **How to identify?**
2. **Comparing products**
3. **Steps to take**
4. **Exceptions**



All project materials to help Consumer Organisations to learn how to test products for dual food quality are freely available on the project's website: [www.fightdualfood.eu/project-materials/](http://www.fightdualfood.eu/project-materials/)

# THE TESTING CAMPAIGN: HOW DOES IT WORK?

The testing campaign consists in **creating a market basket** with branded and private label products respecting specific requirements.

Once the products have been selected, it is necessary to **collect the data for the first analysis level**, referring to the Front of Pack (FOP), the list of ingredients and the nutritional values comparison.

To reach this goal, the selected products need to be **found in the food sale points** and the required data mentioned above have to be **collected by photographing** them.

Once the photos are taken, the FOP, the list of ingredients and the nutritional values need to be elaborated in order to subsequently **share them with the adherent Consumer Organisations**.

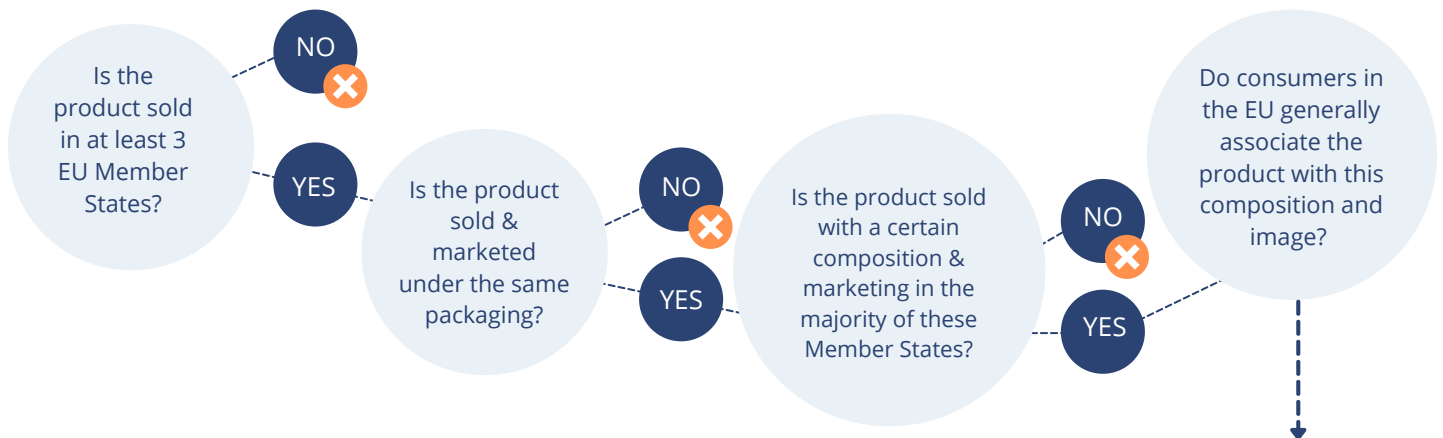
The final goal is to check if the same food products from different EU countries are identical, **comparing the data collected** in the sale points.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## 1 SELECTION OF THE PRODUCTS

### HOW TO SELECT A FOOD PRODUCT?

Be sure to follow the Guidance and Manual requirements for food products:



➔ If the product you are choosing respects all these requirements, then you can include it in the market basket.



HINT

If you struggle to find which are the European countries where the selected food product is marketed and sold, you can **look for the official website of the production firm**, where you will find lots of useful information for your research (e.g. history of the production sites, expansion of the firm and satisfaction rate according to the geographical area).

### IF A PRODUCT HAS BEEN SELECTED BY A PARTNER



➔ If you decide to analyse a product selected by another partner, **be sure to look for the same exact product**: name, brand, quantity, label, specific content (e.g. "Sugar-free" on the FOP), type of packaging (e.g. plastic bottle or glass jar, can or plastic coated paper board). **Check the photos** shared by the project partners in order **to exactly know the type of product that needs to be found in the retail store**.



HINT

When you find a product to analyse, **look at the languages used on the label**. The EU REG. 2011/1169, art. 15., says that "... **mandatory food information shall appear in a language easily understood by the consumers of the Member States where a food is marketed**", "Within their own territory, the Member States in which a food is marketed may stipulate that the particulars shall be given in one or more languages from among the official languages of the Union." This could be useful to identify the EU countries where the food product is marketed.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## 2 COLLECTION OF THE DATA

### BEFORE

It is better to avoid any trouble while taking the photos in the sale point. It is advisable to show **the specific Certification\*** to the responsible of the sale point, in order **to find the conditions to freely conduct the survey.**

### DURING



### → THE INFORMATION ARE NOT READABLE ENOUGH?

**Remember the goal of the survey:** to analyse the FOP and the data related to the list of ingredients and the nutritional values.

Consequently, **be sure to entirely and correctly frame the FOP** and that the data are clearly readable. Remember that the photos will represent the tool to collect and share the information among consumer organisations, **therefore, they will need to be clearly visible.**

### → SPECIAL EDITION CASES

Sometimes, a product may display a **special edition packaging**, related to a promo or to a special event, limited to just one or a few countries. In these cases, **try to find the original version of the packaging to guarantee the feasibility of the comparison** among products from different countries. Another option is to **get in touch with the adherent organisations** and verify if the special edition is present in more countries and, in this case, it could be analysed too.



### AFTER

If it was not possible to find the selected products in one sale point, **try with a different one and remember to check the information provided by the partners about the product**, it may be possible to find the sale point where the good is mainly sold.



### HINT

Exploit the time spent in a retail store to find new products to analyse and suggest them to the project partners.

\*It is possible to find the Certification attached at the end of the Manual. The file is in English; feel free to translate it in your own language and to use it as modifiable sample.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## 3 ELABORATION OF THE DATA

### TRANSLATION

- ➔ When collecting data related to the list of ingredients and nutritional values, it **would be best to translate them in English**, thus allowing the adherent consumers organisations **to easily understand and compare the shared data**.

In order to reach these goals, it is **fundamental to realize an accurate translation**, using proper tools and correct technical terms (e.g. when facing with additives or special ingredients) and being aware of meanings (e.g. false friends words), **always remembering that these information will be object of comparison and a wrong translation might cause a false alarm of Dual Food Quality case**.

### INFORMATION

- ➔ When collecting data about nutritional values, **be sure to check the reference amount**.

100g	25g (porzione)
2023 kcal	506 kcal
483 kcal	121 kcal
22g	5,5g
2,1g	0,5g

**According to EU food law**, the mandatory reference amount for nutritional values reported on label of food products marketed in EU, is 100 g. Nevertheless, in some cases, packaging may include a second reference amount (e.g. the portion for one meal; this does not exclude the presence of the first one – 100g). **Be sure to collect the data that refers to the reference amount of 100g**, so that nutritional values can be comparable with the ones collected from the same product marketed in a different country. You can also report both the options, but be sure to not mistake the first one with the second.



HINT

It is advisable to report the allergens as in the label, with visible and recognisable format. (e.g. usually they are indicated in bold).





Website : [www.fightdualquality.eu](http://www.fightdualquality.eu)



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