

Feasibility of Using the USDA Global Branded Food Products Database to Update a Food and Nutrient Database

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Objective

To evaluate the feasibility of using the USDA Global Branded Food Products Database (GBFPD) to update branded food products in a database used to support a dietary intake assessment software application.

Materials and Methods

In 2020, the University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) database scientist team evaluated whether the GBFPD could be used to update margarine and buttery spreads in the NCC Food and Nutrient Database. NCC staff downloaded all CSV (Comma-Separated Values) files of Branded Foods and merged the files to create a single file that included all the relevant food attributes (e.g., food description, brand, nutrients). Database scientists reviewed the 'butter & spread' food category to identify products from the 16 brands in the NCC Food and Nutrient Database. The identified products were evaluated for currentness and completeness by comparing them to the matching product information available on each brand's website.



TABLE 1: AVAILABILITY OF BRAND MARGARINES IN USDA GLOBAL BRANDED FOOD PRODUCTS DATABASE (GBFPD)

Brand Name	Number of margarine products found on each brand website (collected April 2020)	Number of brand margarines in GBFPD (downloaded May 2020)		
		Available in GBFPD and brand website	Available on brand website, not in GBFPD	Available in GBFPD, not on brand website
Benecol	2	2		
Blue Bonnet	6	2	4	
Brummel & Brown	1	1		1
Canola Harvest	1		1	1
Country Crock/Shedd's	9	3	6	4
Earth Balance	12	8	4	1
Fleischmann's	6	5	1	
I can't believe it's not butter!	6	4	2	1
Imperial	2	1	1	
Land O Lakes	13	1	12	
Olivio	4	3	1	1
Parkay	5	1	4	2
Promise	0			5
Pure Blends	2	1	1	
Smart Balance	12	6	6	3
Smart Beat	0			1

TABLE 2: LAST UPDATED DATE OF THE PRODUCT DATA ON THE BRAND WEBSITE AND IN GBFPD

Brand Name	Brand Website - Last Updated Date	GBFPD - Available Date Range**
Benecol	NA*	6/25/2017 - 7/11/2018
Blue Bonnet	6/27/2019	6/25/2017 - 9/21/2017
Brummel & Brown	NA	8/10/2017 - 4/11/2018
Canola Harvest	NA	1/10/2018
Country Crock/Shedd's	NA	6/25/2017 - 4/11/2018
Earth Balance	8/6/2019	1/11/2018 - 1/6/2019
Fleischmann's	NA	9/22/2017 - 1/10/2018
I can't believe it's not butter!	NA	7/14/2017 - 4/11/2018
Imperial	NA	4/11/2018
Land O Lakes	NA	7/2/2018
Olivio	NA	3/11/2018 - 7/11/2018
Parkay	4/10/2019	6/25/2017 - 3/11/2018
Promise	NA	4/11/2018
Pure Blends	NA	4/11/2018
Smart Balance	NA	7/14/2017 - 1/5/2019
Smart Beat	NA	7/6/2018

Note: *NA - Not Available; **Available Date Range - This is the date when the product record was available for inclusion in the database.

Key Findings

- The GBFPD includes many branded margarine products with required information (e.g., label nutrients, ingredients, etc.) consistently available for all products.
- Majority of the product descriptions from the brand website did not match the product on GBFPD. For example, PARKAY, Squeeze is listed PARKAY, 60% VEGETABLE OIL SPREAD in GBFPD.
- Generally, the number of products listed on the brand website did not match the number of products in the GBFPD. There were more products on GBFPD than on the brand website for some margarines. For example Shedd's margarines were no longer available in the market, but there were four products in GBFPD. For others, the GBFPD had less products than listed on the brand website. For example, there were 13 products on the Land O Lakes website, but only one was available in GBFPD.
- Brand product label ingredients were not listed in the same order in GBFPD as on the brand website for some products. For example, the order of the oils for OLIVIO, LIGHT VEGETABLE OIL SPREAD was palm, canola, and olive oil on the website, but it was canola, palm, and olive oil in GBFPD.
- Most of the GBFPD data for margarines was from one or more years prior to May 2020 (Table 2).

Significance

The GBFPD included many branded margarines with important information (e.g., label nutrients, ingredients, etc.). However, NCC staff chose to use brand website information to update the database because GBFPD didn't appear to consistently have the most current (including the new labels) and complete data for the products. We recommend the partners in Public-Private Partnership consider strategies for ensuring the companies provide product information for their full product line, with updates carried out regularly by them.

