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## **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT**

#### Consumer inferences from different versions of a beta-glucans health claim

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#### Abstract

Health claims communicate the health benefits of food products. The use of health claims is regulated and the regulation requires that the average consumer is able to understand the health claims, as means to protect consumers from misleading claims. Due to the technical terms used in the authorised health claims and the potential of such claims to mislead consumers, attempts to improve consumer understanding of health claims are relevant. The aim of this study was to elicit the inferences that consumers make from different variations of a beta-glucans health claim in order to gain an understanding of how consumers' understanding of health claims can be improved. Two methods for elicitation of inferences, the Consumer Understanding Test (CUT) and laddering interviews, were applied in a study conducted among consumers (N=295) in Denmark. Re-wording an authorised health claim or adding information did not improve understanding and could even decrease consumers' understanding of the claim. Several implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: health claims; laddering; consumer understanding; wording; inferences

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