



# 10<sup>th</sup> Seminar on Nutrition Labeling, Claims and Communication Strategies

August 28-29, 2018 | Renaissance Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

## Updates on Nutrition Labeling and Claims in Southeast Asia

Nutrition labels, as well as nutrition and health claims, are important tools to communicate the nutritional quality and health benefits of a food product to consumers. They provide point-of-sale information and help consumers make informed choices. In Southeast Asia, there is wide disparity between label formats and permitted claims among countries, causing confusion among consumers, and resulting in trade barriers for food manufacturers and distributors.

On August 28-29, 2018, ILSI SEA Region and the ILSI SEA Region Malaysia Country Committee organized the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of ILSI SEA Region's series of seminars on *Nutrition Labeling, Claims and Communication Strategies*. Held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the 1.5-day seminar was co-organized with the Nutrition Society of Malaysia, and in collaboration with the Food Safety and Quality Division (FSQD), Ministry of Health, Malaysia. The seminar aimed to provide an update on regional developments and regulatory changes in nutrition labeling, nutrition and health claims, and related issues in Southeast Asia and other regions.

Ms. Boon Yee Yeong, Executive Director, ILSI SEA Region, Dr. E-Siong Tee, Nutrition Society of Malaysia and Ms. Norrani Eksan, Food Safety and Quality Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia welcomed the participants and opened the seminar.

## Regulatory Updates from Southeast Asia

### Brunei

Ms. Siti Munawwarah Awang Tarif, Ministry of Health, Brunei updated that in 2017 the country has introduced a Healthier Choice Logo Symbol, accompanied by a set of guidelines and nutrient criteria of foods and beverages for local and international food industries and manufacturers. Brunei has also developed new guidelines for 18 food categories on the advertisement of food and beverages to children.

### Lao PDR

Ms. Viengxay Vansilalom, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR shared that the "Regulation on Safe Food Processing, Imported-Exported Food No 586/MOH 2006", "Food Labeling No 519/MOH2009" and "Food Registration Regulation" are currently under revision. On the other hand, the draft on "Decree on the Infant Formula and Follow-up Formula Control" and "Regulation on Food Safety and Nutrition Control in Schools" are being finalized. Lao PDR plans to revise the Food Labeling Regulation according to the Revision of Codex Guidelines and develop nutrition labeling in future.

### Malaysia

Ms. Norrani Eksan, Ministry of Health, Malaysia highlighted that Vitamin K1, Vitamin K2 and Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG) have been gazetted under permitted added nutrient list in Table I, Twelfth Schedule. The Food Safety Quality Division (FSQD) has also proposed amendments to the existing nutrition labeling regulations

which include conditions for added nutrient claims, “no added sugars” and “no added salt” claims, new content claims and conditions, definition and condition of “Other Function Claims”, expansion of nutrient reference value (NRV) list and nutrients requiring mandatory nutrition labeling.

### **Myanmar**

Dr. Ohnmar Soe Win, Food and Drug Administration, Myanmar reported on several updates which included the submission of a new Food Law approval in 2015, commencement of Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) since 2016, removal of the requirement of import recommendation and import health certificate for low risk food items in 2017 as well as export recommendation for local food products with existing food production FDA certification in early 2018. In future, Myanmar plans to replace the manual import recommendation to import online notification.

### **Singapore**

Ms. Yi Ling Tan, Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA), Singapore updated that AVA has increased the number of approved health claims after a proactive review with the Advisory Committee. They have also extended the health claim on blood cholesterol lowering effect to oat beta-glucan, in addition to barley beta-glucan. She shared that the future programs in the pipeline include encouraging industry to formulate products with lower sugar and conducting a review of trans fat in food in response to WHO’s recommendation to eliminate artificial trans-fat by 2023.

### **Thailand**

Ms. Jiraratana Thesasilpa, Food and Drug Administration, Thailand, shared that the amended Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI) of Sodium as well as the extension of Nutrition Labelling and Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) Labeling will be gazetted after the approval by Minister of Public Health. She elaborated that a simplified front-of-pack labeling, “Healthier Choice” logo, accompanied with a set of nutrient profile criteria were being developed for selected product categories.

### **Vietnam**

Mrs. Hoang Thi Thanh Nhan, Vietnam Food Administration, Vietnam, highlighted that their future plan is to gain consumer awareness via mass media and promote information exchange between food producers, industrial designers and regulators as well as harmonize regulations and standards for nutrient content labeling.

### **Updates from India**

Dr. A.C. Mishra, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), India provided an update on the **Status of Nutrition Labeling and Claims Regulation in India**. In recent years, FSSAI has launched various initiatives to achieve its objectives, such as reducing fat, salt and sugar in foods, raising awareness and implementation of food safety practices, training and capacity building. To achieve consistency and transparency in food safety inspection and sampling, FSSAI also launched a nation-wide online platform. Dr. Mishra shared that Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labeling) Regulations 2011 has been revised and has been segregated into three different approved food safety and standards regulations, namely, Advertising and Claims Regulations, Labeling and Display Regulations, and Packaging Regulations.

The **Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling and Claims and Recent Developments** was presented by Dr. E-Siong Tee. He provided an overview of Codex Alimentarius guidelines on nutrition labeling and claims and elaborated on recent developments in two Codex committees - namely, the Codex Committee on Food Labeling (CCFL) and Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU), in the area of nutrition labeling and claims. Dr. Tee highlighted the importance for countries to adopt the Codex guidelines to achieve harmonization of nutrition labeling regulations. He further shared that Malaysia has been tasked by ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ)'s Prepared Foodstuff Product Working Group (PFPWG) to lead a survey on nutrition labeling regulations in the region, and that ILSI SEA Region will contribute to this initiative by sharing key survey findings and outcomes from this seminar and the subsequent workshop with the PFPWG members. Dr. Tee expressed his positive view that the information will be further discussed at future PFPWG meetings, thereby taking a step closer towards harmonization of nutrition labeling regulations in the region.

## **Front-of-Pack Labeling: Recent Developments**

Ms. Fatimah Sulong, Ministry of Health, Malaysia shared on the **Development of Front-of-Pack (FOP) Labeling Schemes in Malaysia – Energy Icon and Healthier Choice Logo**. Food labeling, including simplified nutrition labeling, has been identified as an important tool to help reduce the global issue of increasing incidence of obesity and chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs). In Malaysia, FOP energy icon was launched in 2012 and describes the number of calories contained in certain food and beverages products. The Healthier Choice Logo (HCL), launched in 2017, is part of the strategy to assist consumers in adopting healthy dietary practices by making wise food choices at the point of purchase, as well as to encourage food industries to produce healthier food options to be available in the market. Ms. Fatimah added that any nutrition labeling system needs to be accompanied by awareness and education programmes targeted. It is important that all stakeholders should play a more prominent role in ensuring that consumers utilize nutrition information on food labels.

Mr. Araya Rojjanawanicharkorn, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Thailand, discussed **Communicating Nutrition through FOP in Thailand**. He shared that nutrition information on food labels in Thailand is presented in 3 formats - Nutrition Information Panel (NIP); Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA), and Healthier Choice Symbol. In 2014, Thailand implemented a front-of-pack label, the Healthier Choice Symbol which helps consumers to easily select healthier food and beverage options. The communication strategy surrounding the symbol is primarily online, through viral clips, infographics, motion graphics and influencers providing consumer-friendly content through online channels. Mr. Rojjanawanicharkorn shared a video developed as an initiative to promote the use of the "FoodChoice" application, an educational tool to provide nutrition information on labels via barcode scan. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration and communication among all key stakeholders and providing effective nutrition information to consumers.

Mrs. Susan Kevork, Nestlé R&D Center, Singapore provided a background on **Nutrient Profiling for Labeling and Other Uses**. She illustrated various examples on the applications of nutrient profiling and highlighted that purpose, target population and context must be taken into consideration when using nutrient profiling. She introduced the Nestlé Nutritional Profiling System which helps translates public health recommendation into product targets for reformulation to progressively drive Nestlé's commitment to offer healthier choices.

## Use of Labeling and Claims for Effective Consumer Communication and Challenges

Two research studies on **Unintended Consequences of ‘Healthy’ Food Labels: Promoting Health or Licensing Indulgence** was shared by Dr. Bobby Cheon, Clinical Nutrition Research Centre / Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He revealed that a tendency towards restrained eating was associated with stronger responses to health-related portrayals of the anticipated meals. The research studies also showed that how a food is labeled as ‘healthy’ may have unseen consequences on consumers’ selection and intake of other foods. For instance, a food labeled as low in calories may be more likely to promote compensatory indulgence, while a food labeled as having healthy properties may act as reminders of health goals that inhibit indulgence.

Dr. Junhua Han, China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment, China, presented the **Impact of Nutrition Labels and Claims on Consumers’ Food Choices: The China Story**. She shared various national initiatives to educate consumers on nutrition labeling. A survey was also conducted to understand the comprehension and use of nutrition labels among residents in different areas. Dr. Han noted that the draft of the revised national standard for food nutrition labeling by the China National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFP), which will include the proposed key nutrients to be listed on the label, is expected to be completed by end of 2018.

In his presentation on **Efforts in Communicating and Educating Consumers Using Labels**, Dr. Young-Jun Kim, Seoul National University of Science and Technology, Korea, noted that one of the major amendments made this year in Korea was the change of nutrition facts table and RDI in processed food to reflect the current eating habits of Koreans. He further elaborated on the mandatory and voluntary nutrition labeling in restaurants and food services selling children’s favorite foods. He also noted that considerable efforts have also been made by various food companies in reducing sodium and sugar content in processed products.

Dr. Iain Brownlee, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia discussed the **Issues on the Definition of Whole Grains and Dietary Fiber: Towards Harmonization in Southeast Asia**. He raised several issues including the lack of global and regional definition for whole grain food and varying recommendations for its intake. Hence, further steps should be taken to harmonize these two areas. Dr. Brownlee shared a public-private partnership in Denmark which almost doubled national intake of whole grains over a six-year period. Citing the low intake of whole grains in Southeast Asia, Dr. Brownlee suggested that this could serve as one of the rational approaches for countries in the region to follow.

### Substantiation and Harmonization of Nutrition Labeling and Claims in ASEAN

Dr. Dorothy Mackerras, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Australia presented on **Building Scientific Evidence to Support Nutrition & Health Claims: What’s Next?** She shared that variations in regulations such as whether food includes or excludes products such as vitamin and mineral supplements and language used to describe sub-types of claims could affect how the nutrient profiling and substantiation are implemented. For substantiation of nutrition and health claims, Dr. Mackerras suggested national bodies need to decide what degree of certainty in a food-health relationship is sufficient to allow a claim to be made. In Australia and New Zealand, a systematic review which demonstrates a causal relationship is required to underpin a health claim on a food label.

For the presentation on **Health Claims in Japan – What Scientific Evidence Are We Looking For**, Mr. Hiroaki Hamano, International Consultant on Food Regulations, Algolynx Inc., Japan, highlighted that a new category called “Food with Function Claims (FFC)” was introduced by the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) in 2015. This was in addition to the existing 2 categories: Foods for Specified Health Uses (FOSHU) and Foods with Nutrient Function Claims (FNFC). This new category enables food business operators to make function claims not only on processed or prepackaged foods including presumed ‘dietary supplements’ but also on fresh produce. Mr. Hamano further elaborated on the requirements for the substantiation of FFC such as the types of methods used to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the product.

The final presentation, **Harmonization on Nutrition Labeling, Nutrition and Health Claims: Efforts and Updates in SEA** was given by Ms. Pauline Chan, ILSI SEA Region, Singapore. She explained that there is a lack of harmonization in nutrition labeling and claims regulation among the ASEAN countries, illustrating several examples such as the difference in the number and types of nutrients to be declared on nutrition information panels (NIP) and the types of health claims permitted. Ms. Chan shared her view that harmonizing nutrition labeling and claims regulations could help to improve consumer understanding of key messages on food labels, as well as promote a reduction of technical barriers to the commercial distribution of foods and beverages in the region.

Ms. Chan shared that at the 9<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Nutrition Labeling and Claims organized by ILSI SEA Region and held in Manila, Philippines in 2015, seven priority areas of NIP were identified for potential harmonization within ASEAN, and follow up discussion on these seven areas were continued in 2016 in Hanoi, Vietnam at the Nutrition Labeling and Claims Workshop. The key outcomes of the workshops were shared with PFPWG. Ms. Chan emphasized that ILSI SEA Region will continue to provide a platform to assist PFPWG and ASEAN regulators in regulatory updates on nutrition labeling and claims, and to facilitate continuing discussions on harmonization.

### **Panel Discussion and Conclusion**

The seminar concluded with a panel discussion, with the panelists highlighting various benefits of harmonization of nutrition labeling and claims. It was recognized that clear and standardized nutrition information will facilitate better understanding and interpretation by consumers when making food choices. Supporting the development of technical infrastructure and capacity building, as well as facilitating active engagement by the various countries, could be key areas that ILSI SEA Region can contribute to in the harmonization process.

Finally, the panel hoped that regulators from ASEAN member states could provide full support and commitment to the harmonization of nutrition labeling and claims. While there are inevitable challenges to overcome, the panel expressed optimism in achieving regional harmonization, and look forward to the development of a guideline for nutrition labeling and claims in the near future.