Nutrition Labelling & claims: Codex standards update

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Outline ....

- Introduction
  - Codex standards on nutrition labelling and claims - historical and codex committees

- Nutrition labelling
  - Review NRVs for vitamins and minerals
  - New work on NRV in relation to NCDs
  - Nutrients that are always declared
  - Mandatory declaration of nutrients

- Nutrition and health claims
  - Conditions for content and comparative claim for sodium and TFA
  - New claims on non-addition of sugar and sodium

- Concluding
Codex guidelines on nutrition labelling and claims ....
Codex Alimentarius has been working in the area of nutrition labelling and nutrition and health claims for several decades

- Nutrition labelling guidelines were first published 25 years ago in 1985
- Guidelines on nutrition and health claims published in 1997
- Adoption of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (DPAH) by the WHA in 2004 provided further impetus to Codex to further work on these two areas
- To provide useful nutrition information on food packages to help consumers in food choices
WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health ….
To address the rapid spread of NCDs

- especially in developing countries
- tackling the main factors of diet and physical activity

GLOBAL STRATEGY ON DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

In May 2004, the 57th World Health Assembly (WHA) endorsed the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The Strategy was developed through a wide-ranging series of consultations with all concerned stakeholders in response to a request from Member States at World Health Assembly 2002 (Resolution WHA55.23).

The Strategy, together with the Resolution by which it was endorsed (WHA57.17), are contained in this document.
The WHA has called for governments, civil society and the international community, including the private sector, to renew their commitment to encouraging healthy patterns of diet and physical activity.

In the context of the theme of this Seminar, the roles of the food industry and health professionals are particularly relevant.

The WHA specifically refers to the work of Codex Alimentarius in improving food standards and assisting consumers in making healthy food choices.
Two subsidiary bodies of Codex have been particularly active in this work, namely

- Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) and
- Codex Committee on Food Labeling (CCFL)

This presentation summarises recent work (2010-2012) of these Codex committees in the area of nutrition labeling and claims
Codex guidelines on nutrition labelling ....
GUIDELINES ON NUTRITION LABELLING

CAC/GL 2-1985

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES
To ensure that nutrition labelling is effective:
• In providing the consumer with information about a food so that a wise choice of food can be made;
• in providing a means for conveying information of the nutrient content of a food on the label;
• in encouraging the use of sound nutrition principles in the formulation of foods which would benefit public health;
• in providing the opportunity to include supplementary nutrition information on the label.
To ensure that nutrition labelling does not describe a product or present information about it which is in any way false, misleading, deceptive or insignificant in any manner.
To ensure that no nutrition claim is made without nutrition labelling.

PRINCIPLES FOR NUTRITION LABELLING
A. Nutrient declaration
   – Information supplied should be for the purpose of providing consumers with a suitable profile of nutrients contained in the food and considered to be of nutritional importance. The information should not lead consumers to believe that there is exact quantitative knowledge of what individuals should eat in order to maintain health, but rather to convey an understanding of the quantity of nutrients contained in the product. A more exact quantitative delineation for individuals is not valid because there is no meaningful way in which knowledge about individual requirements can be used in labelling.

B. Supplementary nutrition information
   – The content of supplementary nutrition information will vary from one country to another and within any country from one target population group to another according to the educational policy of the country and the needs of the target groups.

C. Nutrition labelling
   – Nutrition labelling should not deliberately imply that a food which carries such labelling has necessarily any nutritional advantage over a food which is not so labelled.
Nutrition labelling ……

- Nutrition labelling is a description intended to inform the consumer of nutritional properties of a food
- Often taken to mean Nutrient Declaration
  - which is a standardised statement or listing of the nutrient content of a food (energy, protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins, minerals, etc)
  - Often known as Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)
- Nutrient Declaration is voluntary for all foods
  - except when nutrition claims are made
Section 3.4.4 - NRV

3.4.4 Numerical information on vitamins and minerals should be expressed in metric units and/or as a percentage of the Nutrient Reference Value per 100 g or per 100 ml or per package if the package contains only a single portion. In addition, this information may be given per serving as quantified on the label or per portion provided that the number of portions contained in the package is stated.

In addition, information on protein may also be expressed as percentages of the Nutrient Reference Value.

The following Nutrient Reference Values should be used for labelling purposes in the interests of international standardization and harmonization:

- Protein (g) 50
- Vitamin A (µg) 800
- Vitamin D (µg) 5
- Vitamin C (mg) 60
- Thiamin (mg) 1.4
- Riboflavin (mg) 1.6
- Niacin (mg) 18
- Vitamin B₆ (mg) 2
- Folic acid (µg) 200
- Vitamin B₁₂ (µg) 1
- Calcium (mg) 800
- Magnesium (mg) 300
- Iron (mg) 14
- Zinc (mg) 15
- Iodine (µg) 150
- Copper Value to be established
- Selenium Value to be established

NRV now has:
- 9 vitamins
- 7 minerals
- protein
ANNEX: GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ESTABLISHING NUTRIENT REFERENCE VALUES OF VITAMINS AND MINERALS FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

1. PREAMBLE

These principles apply to the establishment of Codex Nutrient Reference Values for labelling purposes (NRVs) for vitamins and minerals for the general population identified as individuals older than 36 months. These values may be used for helping consumers 1) estimate the relative contribution of individual products to overall healthful dietary intake and 2) as one way to compare the nutrient content between products.

Governments are encouraged to use the NRVs, or alternatively, consider the suitability of the general principles below and additional factors specific to a country or region in establishing their own nutrient reference values for labelling purposes. For example, at the national level, population-weighted values for the general population may be established by weighting science-based reference values for daily intakes for age-sex groups using census data for a country and proportions of each age-sex group. In addition, governments may establish nutrient reference values for food labelling that take into account country or region specific factors that affect nutrient absorption, or utilization, or requirements. Governments may also consider whether to establish separate food labelling reference values for specific segments of the general population such as pregnant and lactating women.
Review NRV for vitamins and minerals (3)

- For general population (>36 months), for labelling purposes
- NRVs may be used for helping consumers
  1. estimate the relative contribution of individual products to overall healthful dietary intake and
  2. as one way to compare the nutrient content between products
- NRV is used as a reference in nutrient content claim and comparative claim
- Governments are encouraged to use the NRVs
Discussions on reviewing Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) for vitamins and minerals continuing

FAO and WHO collected information from various sources including 55 countries on existing daily intake reference values for 28 vitamin and mineral

An eWG will be established to discuss this Review of Existing Daily Vitamin and Mineral Intake Reference Values

\* to recommend NRVs and to identify and report any issues in the application of the General Principles for Establishing NRVs of Vitamins and Minerals.
NRV for nutrients in relation to NCDs (1)

- CAC adopted amendment to definition of NRV

“Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) are a set of numerical values that are based on scientific data for purposes of nutrition labelling and relevant claims. NRVs are based on levels of nutrients associated with nutrient requirements, or with the reduction in the risk of diet-related non-communicable diseases.”
NRV for nutrients in relation to NCDs (2)

- New work on development of NRVs for nutrients associated with NCD (NRVs-NCD)
- First part to establish principles and criteria for development of NRVs NCD
- Main aspects include
  - Definition
  - Criteria for selection of nutrients
  - Consideration of substitution effect
  - Suitable data source to establish NRVs-NCD
  - Appropriate basis for expressing NRVs-NCD
  - Upper level of intake
Second part of work to establish NRV for selected nutrients

- Commencing with saturated fatty acid (20 g) and sodium (2000 mg)
- Tabled at 35th CAC (2012) to be advanced to step 5/8
- Document advanced to Step 5, to be further discussed in CCFNSDU
Principles and criteria to enhance legibility of nutrition labelling

- To enhance consumer understanding of nutrition labels
- Adopted at 2010 session of CAC
- A new section 4 has been inserted into revised document and existing sections renumbered
4. PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR LEGIBILITY OF NUTRITION LABELLING

4.1 General principles
In the case of nutrition labelling whether applied on a mandatory or voluntary basis, the principles of Sections 8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.1.3 and 8.2 of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) should be applied. Sections 8.1.1, 8.1.2 and 8.1.3 should be applied to any supplementary nutrition labels.

4.2 Specific features of presentation

4.2.1 These recommendations related to specific features of presentation are intended to enhance the legibility of nutrition labelling. However, competent authorities may determine any additional means of presentation of nutrition information taking into account approaches and practical issues at the national level and based on the needs of their consumers.

4.2.2 Format – Nutrient content should be declared in a numerical, tabular format. Where there is insufficient space for a tabular format, nutrient declaration may be presented in a linear format.

4.2.3 Nutrients should be declared in a specific order developed by competent authorities and should be consistent across food products.

4.2.4 Font – The font type, style and a minimum font size as well as the use of upper and lower case letters should be considered by competent authorities to ensure legibility of nutrition labelling.

4.2.5 Contrast – A significant contrast should be maintained between the text and background so as to be that the nutrition information is clearly legible.

4.2.6 Numerical Presentation – The numerical presentation of nutrient content should be in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.4.
Nutrient declaration (2)

- Nutrients that are always declared
  - clause 3.2.1 of the Guidelines were amended
  - currently energy and 3 nutrients must be declared
  - expanded by adding saturated fat, sodium/salt and total sugars to the existing 4 (energy, carbohydrate, protein and fat)
  - adopted at 2011 session of CAC
Amended to add sat fat, sodium/salt & total sugars:

3.2 Listing of Nutrients

3.2.1 Where nutrient declaration is applied, the declaration of the following should be mandatory:

3.2.1.1 Energy value; and

3.2.1.2 The amounts of protein, available carbohydrate (i.e. dietary carbohydrate excluding dietary fibre), fat, saturated fat, [sodium/salt] and total sugars; and

3.2.1.3 The amount of any other nutrient for which a nutrition or health claim is made; and

3.2.1.4 The amount of any other nutrient considered to be relevant for maintaining a good nutritional status, as required by national legislation or national dietary guidelines.¹

Note: 1. DF not included in the list of nutrients to be declared; 2. declaration of trans fatty acid is left to decision of national authority

¹Countries where the level of intake of trans-fatty acids is a public health concern should consider the declaration of trans-fatty acids in nutrition labelling.
Voluntary vs mandatory declaration debated for some years in Codex

Recently concluded CAC in July 2012 amendment nutrition labeling guidelines to make nutrient declaration mandatory for all pre-packaged foods except where national circumstances would not support such declarations.

document to serve as a tool to governments in considering implementation of mandatory nutrition labelling also became available

- various considerations e.g. cost/benefit, need, role in public health, practical considerations, trade implications
Codex guidelines on nutrition and health claims ....
GUIDELINES FOR USE OF NUTRITION AND HEALTH CLAIMS

Nutrition claims should be consistent with national nutrition policy and support that policy. Only nutrition claims that support national nutrition policy should be allowed.

Health claims should be consistent with national health policy, including nutrition policy, and support such policies where applicable. Health claims should be supported by a sound and sufficient body of scientific evidence to substantiate the claim, provide truthful and non-misleading information to aid consumers in choosing healthful diets and be supported by specific consumer education. The impact of health claims on consumers’ eating behaviours and dietary patterns should be monitored, in general, by competent authorities. Claims of the type described in section 3.4 of the Codex General Guidelines on Claims are prohibited.

1. SCOPE

1.1 These guidelines relate to the use of nutrition and health claims in food labelling and, where required by the authorities having jurisdiction, in advertising.

1.2 These guidelines apply to all foods for which nutrition and health claims are made without prejudice to specific provisions under Codex standards or Guidelines relating to Foods for Special Dietary Uses and Foods for Special Medical Purposes.

1.3 These guidelines are intended to supplement the Codex General Guidelines on Claims and do not supersede any prohibitions contained therein.

1.4 Nutrition and health claims shall not be permitted for foods for infants and young children except where specifically provided for in relevant Codex standards or national legislation.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 \textit{Nutrition claim} means any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular nutritional properties including but not limited to the energy value and to the content of protein, fat and carbohydrates, as well as the content of vitamins and minerals. The following do not constitute nutrition claims:
(a) the mention of substances in the list of ingredients;
(b) the mention of nutrients as a mandatory part of nutrition labelling;
(c) quantitative or qualitative declaration of certain nutrients or ingredients on the label if required by national legislation.

http://www.codexalimentarius.org/standards/list-of-standards/en/
Nutrition claim means any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular nutritional properties
- Nutrient content claim
- Comparative claim

Health claims means any representation that states, suggests or implies that a relationship exists between a food or a constituent of that food and health, includes
- nutrient function claim
- other function claim and
- reduction of disease risk claims
Nutrient content and comparative claim (1)

- Codex Alimentarius Commission 2012 adopted amendments to a few clauses in these Guidelines
- Under nutrient content claim, a new section 5.2 is inserted
  - allowing claims to the effect that a food is free of salt provided the food meets the conditions for free of sodium
- Amendment to section 6.3 to require that for a comparative claim for sodium, a relative difference of at least 25% is required
  - currently a difference of 10% is sufficient
Nutrient content and comparative claim (2)

- Section 6.4 of Comparative Claims amended
  - the content of trans fatty acids should not increase for foods carrying a comparison claim for decreased saturated fatty acids content

- New section 6.5 has been inserted in Comparative Claims
  - the use of the word “light” or synonymous claim should follow the criteria listed in section 6.3 of these Guidelines and include an indication of the characteristics which make the food “light”
CAC 2012 also adopted amendments in relation to “non-addition” claims

- Insertion of a new definition 2.1.3 for “non-addition claim”
  - any claim that an ingredient has not been added to a food, either directly or indirectly
  - the ingredient is one whose presence or addition is permitted in the food and which consumers would normally expect to find in the food

- Addition of a new clause 7.1 for claim of “non-addition of sugars” to food and the required conditions

- A new clause 7.2 for claim of “non-addition of sodium salts” to food and the required conditions was advanced to step 5 of the procedure
Nutrient content and comparative claim (4)

- Other matters discussed in CCFL and CCNFSDU include the development of “free” or “low” trans-fatty acids claims and conditions for inclusion in the nutrient content claim of these Guidelines.
  - Currently table only lists energy, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium.

- Also a proposal to establish two categories of foods for the purpose of defining the proposed claim: oils and fats, oil and fat emulsion (water in oil or oil in water) and ready to eat or other foods.

- Interest to review the definition of trans fatty acids.
Concluding remarks ....
There has been significant developments in the area of nutrition labeling and claims in Codex Alimentarius.

These have important implications on the development of national regulations in the region.

Codex standards often become adopted as national regulations:
- thus vital for governments and the food industry to monitor these developments
- participate actively in the deliberations to shape the outcomes of Codex standards

Adoption of Codex standards by SEA countries varies, leading to non-harmonised regulations:
- causes difficulties for common packages to be distributed across the region.
- Opportunities for networking among countries, e.g., through ILSI SEA Region workshop series
  - platform for regulators to exchange of experiences since 2001
  - understand differences & similarities
  - promote scientific basis of regulations
- ILSI seminar series include an update on Codex
  - to share with regulators, industry, on developments in Codex
  - explore opportunities for harmonisation, as intended by Codex Alimentarius
- Also through ASEAN structure, e.g., ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ)
Increasing awareness among consumers of the importance of nutrition to health and disease
- demand for healthier alternatives, innovations
- healthy competition among companies
- general consumer expectations

Regulatory agencies & industry are interested to have clear regulations on labelling & claims

Regulatory agencies are sensitive to the challenges faced by industry
- willing to discuss with the industry
- opportunities exist for dialogues especially through industry associations
- gazette regulations that are in the best interest of the consumer, industry and government
Have a fruitful seminar!