Recently, the Food and Nutrition Institute of the Department of Science and Technology (FNRI-DOST), Philippines, led the formulation of the 2015 Philippine Dietary Reference Intakes by an expert committee from various institutions to seek the revision of the 2002 Recommended Energy and Nutrient Intake (RENI). The Philippine DRIs were conceived as a set of guidelines for Filipinos for the daily intake of energy and nutrients and other food components (such as fiber) in terms of Estimated Average Requirement (EAR), Recommended Energy and Nutrient Intake (REI/RNI), Adequate Intake (AI) and Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL). The guidelines could be used in many ways by different users such as in assessing people's nutrient intakes, planning diets, and developing appropriate nutrition education materials for individuals or population groups. Accordingly, the ILSI SEA Region Philippine Country Committee organized a seminar in collaboration with the FNRI and the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers, Inc., to disseminate the 2015 Philippine DRI (2015 PDRI) to stakeholders from government, industry, academics and researchers, with the objective of promoting the understanding of the concepts, principles and basis for the revision and its application in policy and program formulation. The Seminar was held on December 3, 2015, at the Hotel Intercontinental Manila, Makati City, Philippines, attended by some 140 stakeholders from various disciplines.

The first speaker was Dr. Rosario S. Sagum, the Chairperson of the FNRI 2015 PDRI Technical Working Group, who discussed the principles, concepts and processes that were followed in the formulation of the 2015 PDRI. The new reference was formulated by an Expert Committee formed by FNRI together with a Technical Working Group from the Institute, and subjected to an External Review and Stakeholders Meeting. The new guide adopted the multi-level approach for setting nutrient intakes in order to meet the needs of various users for appropriate nutrient reference values such as for planning and assessing diets, for setting food production targets, and drawing up food and nutrition policies. The formulation of the 2015 PDRI took into account the new developments in nutrition science and recommendations including the recent WHO/FAO and IOM guidelines which were used as reference and when local data were unavailable; the 2006 WHO Child Growth Standards; the results of the recent National Nutrition Surveys of FNRI; as well as the trends in nutrition-related diseases particularly NCDs. The end points of the new recommendations are to satisfy the needs of nearly all apparently healthy Filipinos not only to prevent nutrient deficiency and for some the prevention of chronic disease, but also to avoid excess.

Dr. Maria Regina Pedro, a member of the DRI Expert Committee, compared the important elements of the 2015 PDRI against the 2002 Philippine RENI. Dr. Pedro began by first listing the
references by nutrient from the scientific literature including local data on Filipino subjects that were used for the formulation of the reference intakes. Dr. Pedro discussed in some detail, the bases for the review of the 2002 RENI: firstly, the availability of new methods in estimating nutrient requirement – for example, the use of stable isotopes in determining breast milk volume, the use of doubly labeled water in estimating energy requirement, and the application of factorial method in the estimation of protein requirement; secondly, the adoption of the updated child growth standards/growth reference from WHO and the WHO/NCHS, and the adult weight and height data from the 2008 National Nutrition Survey of FNRI - and indeed, many of the differences in the recommendations arose from the increase in the reference weights of Filipinos; thirdly, new scientific evidence useful in estimating nutrient requirements such as data on storage efficiency of vitamin A and bioavailability of iron from foods, the new evidence on human milk volume and on nutrient requirements particularly of energy, protein, vitamins A and E, iron and iodine, and others; and fourthly, the need to align with recent universal goals such IYCF, the prevention of obesity and NCDs, recent expert recommendations on sugar, fatty acids, dietary fiber and others. Dr. Pedro concluded that providing the various components of DRI would be useful in meeting the need of various stakeholders and giving clarity on appropriate NRVs for different uses. For example, for nutritional assessment for groups and individuals and for planning food fortification programs, the use of EAR or AI (when EAR is not available) may be appropriate. In dietary planning for individuals and groups where the goal is to ensure that the probability of inadequacy is low, the REI/RNI maybe the appropriate DRI.

Mr. Carl Vincent Cabanilla, a member of the FNRI Technical Working Group on DRI, discussed the uses and applications of the various components of the PDRI, namely, EAR, REI/RNI, AI and UL. After presenting a conceptual framework in arriving at the uses of dietary standards, he summarized the major uses and applications of EAR, REI/RNI, AI and UL. For dietary assessment of individuals and groups, the EAR, AI and UL may be useful. For dietary planning, REI/RNI, AI and UL may be useful in the dietary assessment of individuals, while EAR, REI and UL may be used in dietary assessment of groups of individuals. Mr. Cabanilla then gave sample applications of the PDRI: evaluating an individual’s diet as a basis for recommending specific changes in food patterns and needs; estimating the percentage of the population at risk of inadequate intake; assessing the contribution of the various food groups or specified nutrient in the of the diet of the different population groups; comparing the nutrient intake of population subgroups with dietary reference standards to determine which nutrients are inadequately consumed; using the guide for developing new or modified food products; using the nutrient reference standards as reference points for food labels and for goal-setting for agricultural production; and estimating food poverty line using a representative adequate food basket.

Ms. Maria Lourdes A. Vega, Chief, Nutrition Policy and Planning Division of the Philippine National Nutrition Council, discussed the implications of the 2015 PDRI to food and nutrition policies and programs. Ms. Vega agreed to the relevance of the revision of 2002 dietary
The application of the 2015 PDRI to nutrition label regulations in the Philippines was discussed by **Ms. Christian Grace B. Estimada**, Food and Drug Regulation Officer, Center for Food Regulation and Research, Philippine Food and Drugs Administration. After summarizing the revised rules and regulations of FDA governing the labeling of pre-packaged food products, Ms. Estimada pointed to some relevant regulations in the revised rules that will have to be attended to with the adoption of the 2015 PDRI. For example, the statement, “Based on the 2015 PDRI REI/RNI” will need to be put under the Nutrition Information table instead of “Based on 2002 RENI”. The computation of energy and nutrient levels for the general population shall be based on values for the Reference Male, 19-29 yrs old, while the computation of energy and nutrient levels of products intended for children shall be based on values for males, 6-9 yrs old unless specified otherwise. For the purpose of computation on the levels of dietary fiber, the mid-value of 23 g based on recommended range of 20-25 g for adults, and the mean value of 13 g based on the recommended range of 11-14 g for children 6-9 yrs old shall be used. The %RNI of sodium for the general population shall be computed using the recommended value of 400 mg for children and 500 mg for adults. While the declaration’s target date of issuance is December 2015, Ms. Estimada stated that food companies are allowed to exhaust their old labels until 31 December 2016.

Finally, the implications of the 2015 PDRI to the food industry was discussed by **Ms. Elizabeth M. De Leon-Lim**, Director of the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers, Inc. Ms. De Leon first compared the provisions of the old FDA Administrative Order 88-B s. 1984 with new Administrative Order 2014-0030. For example, while AO 88-B provided for the declaration of food additives by class name, the new AO provided for the declaration of food additives by their common name and their functional category. The new labeling guidelines included additional requirements including storage condition, expiry/use-by-date/consume before, food allergen information. The nutrition facts table is now mandatory, and its footnote will need to be changed to “Based on 2015 DRI RENI for..”. Moreover, the new regulation allows voluntary Front-of-Pack labeling in the form of a cylindrical format containing the energy or caloric content of the pre-processed food product per serving and the percentage of the caloric value based on the revised RENI for energy. Fortunately the Secretary of Health has approved the Chamber’s request to extend the exhaustion of existing labels until the end of 2016. Finally Ms. De Leon pointed out some challenges of the 2015 PDRI to the food industry: putting nutrition information in small packages; how the 2015 PDRI could be a non-barrier to trade; the need to
clarify RENI declaration for other nutrients such as sodium; and whether FDA will allow another extension of the new labeling implementation.

The open forum that followed centered on the new regulation of the FDA and how the challenges to the food industry could be met especially in pre-packaged food labeling. Questions were also raised on the basis for the protein requirement for infants, for example; some nutrients and food components that are not included in the 2015 PDRI; the use of the different components of the DRI, and the meaning of “requirement” as against “allowance”. However, the most thorny issues discussed were on the way the PDRI would be applied for different uses, including agriculture planning, definition of hunger index and poverty level, assessment of the level of nutritional adequacy of individuals and populations, and its practical application to the ordinary consumer.

Ms. Mary Jude Icasiano, Nutritionist of Wyeth Philippines, Inc., delivered the synthesis of the afternoon’s seminar. Ms. Icasiano first pointed out the main feature of the new dietary standards, which is the use of a multi-level approach to help different stakeholders achieve their respective nutritional goals. The 2015 PDRI took note of new scientific evidences, both local and foreign, at the same time adopting recent authoritative standards, i.e., the protein requirements of IYCF, the recent Philippine National Nutrition Surveys, and others. At the same time, the new dietary standards for Filipinos took note of the changing dietary and disease patterns including the increasing prevalence of NCDs. The major issue that arose from the excellent presentations and the discussion that followed was how to efficiently transition and translate the PDRIs into the different needs of various stakeholders. Much will depend on the objectives that one wishes to achieve. Current food and nutrition policies and programs including food labeling regulations, will need to consider the changes of the new dietary reference from the former 2002 RENI. The major challenge is how to educate users on what tool to use and for what purpose. Amid the many other challenges and obstacles in the use of the updated reference standards, the 2015 Philippine Dietary Reference Intakes will now be the guide and tool that will hopefully redound to its ultimate objective, the optimum nutritional health of the population. In closing, Ms. Icasiano thanked the speakers for their time and excellent presentation, the sponsors for their give-aways, and the audience for their avid participation.