



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération Mondiale des Associations de Santé Publique
Federación Mundial de las Asociaciones de Salud Pública
Всемирная Федерация Ассоциаций Общественного
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世界公共卫生联盟
الاتحاد العالمي لجمعيات الصحة العامة

A CALL FOR ACTION ON FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABELS

International Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labels Webinar
World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)
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Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally. Unhealthy diets increase the risk of dying from an NCD. Estimations from 2016 suggest that 124 million children suffer from obesity, this number is 11 times higher than 40 years ago. National and international food-based dietary guidelines promote the consumption of fresh foods and the modification of the food environment.

With the production of a large number of manufactured foods combined with poor nutritional education, consumption tends to shift towards pre-packaged foods. However, the nutritional quality of such foods is very poorly understood by consumers. Front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FoPL) may encourage people to adopt healthier diets for themselves and for their children by making conscious and easier food choices. It may also influence companies to reformulate their products to meet healthier standards. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that “consumers require accurate, standardized and comprehensible information on the content of food items in order to make healthy diet choices” and calls for countries to develop and implement FoPL systems.

The WFPHA through the International Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labels Webinar aims to provide insights into the implementation of schemes on food labelling in different countries. The aim is to analyse potential effectiveness and to present necessary tools to advance effective advocacy and policy measures. Therefore, we encourage all governments, the private sector and especially food industries, NGOs, health professionals, consumers and all stakeholders to ensure that public health remains at the centre of all policy.

We call on all actors to apply an approach set out in the *Global Charter for the Public's Health*:

SERVICES:

- **Prevention**
 - Support the implementation of WHO Global Action Plan on NCDs relating to promoting healthier diets, the report of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity, and the WHO Global Nutrition Targets 2025, especially towards child obesity prevention
 - Increase consumer understanding of FoPL systems to maximise benefits and efficacy in practice
 - Increase understanding of the range of issues involved in the development, effective implementation and use of FoPL

- **Protection**
 - Support improved nutrition labelling through policies and regulations that promote better nutrition literacy among consumers and stimulate healthier reformulation by food industries
 - Promote independent monitoring and surveillance to assess and document impacts of FoPL in promoting healthier diets, and reducing the burden of diet-related NCDs.
- **Health Promotion**
 - Apply an understanding of the social determinants of health and food environments
 - Address the “causes of the causes” of increasing obesity and NCDs
 - Empower individuals and change behaviour through improved food environments and health literacy linked to consumption of healthy foods.

ENABLERS:

- **Good Governance**
 - Support WHO and Codex Alimentarius in the development and implementation of international standards for FoPL to protect public health over the interest of commerce and trade
 - Ensure strong government leadership in the development and implementation of effective FOPL systems
 - Strengthen international, national and local legislation in all areas that impact on healthy diets with a particular focus on legislation (FoPL, food marketing, school environments, food taxes and subsidies, etc.)
 - Develop and strengthen cross-sectoral strategies, policies and institutions to improve action on FoPL
 - Ensure transparency, accountability and best practice governance in dealing with FoPL and food policies
 - Engagement with the food industry in health policy should only be undertaken within the context of achieving maximum population reach and public health impact. Particular care must be taken to avoid conflicts of interest in both the policy development stage and implementation phase.
- **Accurate Information**
 - Increase understanding through strengthened independent surveillance and research of systems of FoPL and their impact
 - Disperse accurate information as widely as possible through traditional and social media
 - Commit to effective government supported campaigns warning of the dangers of unhealthy food and highlighting the advantages of healthy food.
- **Capacity building**
 - Improve knowledge and understanding of healthy diet and appropriate use of FoPL systems through effective education and training
 - Expand knowledge and understanding beyond institutions and health professionals with a special focus on research and education that will have impact on diets of children

- **Advocacy**

- Improve civil society leadership to address diet-related disease in communities, with government and with the private sector
- Engage health practitioners and other professionals, farmers, teachers, journalists, NGOs and all stakeholders to provide a strong voice in the media, in the community and to government to encourage healthy diets and to counter unhealthy food production, advertisement, distribution and consumption
- Support efforts to ensure FoPL systems are understood and there is appropriate accountability in the way they are implemented
- Improve coordination of the wider advocacy community to 'speak with one voice', to be better heard, and to avoid confusing stakeholders with conflicting messaging

Conclusion

The WFPHA on behalf of its member Public Health Associations calls on all public health professionals in all walks of life to encourage governments to take action to make the healthy food choice the easy choice. Additionally, we encourage support for strong, effective FoPL systems that play a role in improving population health through improved nutrition and a more open, effective, and readily understood system of identifying the healthiness of packaged food.