

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 7

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-fourth Session

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(Comments from FoodDrinkEurope)

Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling

General comments

FoodDrinkEurope supports new work by Codex Alimentarius/ CCFL to develop general guidelines that provide clear and transparent scientific guidance on the implementation of Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPL). This will help for harmonization and for better understanding of consumers.

FoodDrinkEurope participated actively in the eWG and suggests that further work be undertaken to complete the overview of labelling schemes.

Specific comments

In the development of guidelines, FoodDrinkEurope wishes to provide the following preliminary considerations:

- Empowering consumers with science based, understandable information is key. The **objective** of these schemes should be to provide consumers with accurate and transparent nutrition information labelling, based on sound science and in a format that best helps them to easily understand the essential nutrition information for their decision to purchase foods and to make informed decisions.
- **New work on FOPL shall respect the existing guidelines and principles of the Codex Alimentarius** related to nutrition labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985 CODEX Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling) and claims (CAC/GL 1-1979 CODEX General Guidelines on Claims). We wish to remind the Committee in particular of the following provisions:
 - Point 3.5 of the Codex General Guidelines on Claims (CAC/GL 1-1979) prohibits claims “*which could arouse or exploit fear in the consumer*”.
 - The Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling establishes that the information contained in the nutrient declaration “*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*”.
 - According to the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling, the overall purpose of nutrition labelling should be to provide the consumer with information about the nutrient content of a food so that a wise choice of food can be made. As for “*supplementary nutrition information*”, this should be intended “*to increase the consumer’s understanding of the nutritional value of their food and to assist in interpreting the nutrient declaration*”. In any case, “*nutrition labelling cannot describe a product or present information about it which is in any way false, misleading, deceptive or insignificant in any manner*”.
- In the EU, Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers provides the relevant framework for voluntary nutrition information (in addition to mandatory nutrition information requirements). Additional forms of expression and/or presentation are allowed provided the following requirements are met:
 - they are based on **sound and scientifically valid consumer research** and **do not mislead the consumer**;
 - their development is the result of **consultation with a wide range of stakeholder groups**;

- they aim to **facilitate consumer understanding** of the contribution or importance of the food to the energy and nutrient content of a diet;
 - they are **supported by scientifically valid evidence of understanding** of such forms of expression or presentation by the average consumer;
 - in the case of other forms of expression, they **are based either on the harmonised reference intakes, or in their absence, on generally accepted scientific advice on intakes for energy or nutrients**;
 - they are **objective and non-discriminatory**; and
 - their application **does not create obstacles to the free movement of goods**.
- In terms of scope, first and foremost there should be a reference that supplementary **front of pack nutrition labelling should be optional (voluntary) and only given in addition to, not in place of, the nutrition declaration**. It should be applicable to as many prepackaged foods as possible, where the information is meaningful to the consumer, except those that are exempt on the basis of nutritional or dietary insignificance and where packaging is restricted through shape or size. It should be specified which product categories are excluded from the scope (e.g. foods for special dietary purposes).
 - FOPL nutrition information **may be communicated to consumers by other communication means than the label**, for example on Websites or Digital App, in particular when the size of the pack is small. This should be considered in this work too.
 - **Consumer understanding, monitoring and evaluation** should form the cornerstone of further work on this topic. **Health literacy** is also to be taken into consideration here.
 - Finally, as a process comment, it is important for the Committee to get access to the expected **reports from the World Health Organization (WHO)** so that they can be considered at the start of the process.