

codex alimentarius commission E



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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WORLD
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Agenda Item 9

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Tenth session

Nuku'alofa, Tonga, 28-31 October 2008

NUTRITIONAL ISSUES WITHIN THE REGION

Replies to CL 2008/12-NASWP, Part D of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

(i) Nutritional issues within the country or region such as: obesity, nutritional profiles, and any public health-oriented actions taken including the use of nutritional labelling and claims

AUSTRALIA

Obesity

Australia recognises that being overweight and obesity are serious health issues and are recognised as national health priorities. A Preventative Health Taskforce has been established to develop a National Preventative Health Strategy by mid-2009. To address this significant challenge the Government is committed to addressing obesity, promoting healthy lifestyles and preventative measures to improve the health of Australians and is introducing several initiatives, for example guidelines on healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings.

Nutrition Labelling

The provision of nutritional information in the form of a nutrition information panel (NIP) has been mandatory on most packaged foods in Australia since 2002. The NIP provides consumers with information to make informed choices on the basis of nutritional content. The mandatory nutrients are energy, protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium. The declaration of other nutrients is triggered in response to a claim.

There has been increased interest in food labelling schemes as a means of providing consumers with a simplified, 'at a glance', nutrition labelling scheme. Consideration is still being given to whether food labelling would be an effective public health strategy in Australia, or whether a Front of Pack Label would play a part in influencing healthier food choices.

Nutrition, Health and Related Claims

FSANZ is currently developing a new standard for nutrition, health and related claims under Proposal P293. The draft standard addresses nutrition content, general level and high level health claims. A nutrient profiling system, known as Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criteria (NPSC) has been developed as part of the new standard and applies to health claims. They do not apply to nutrition content claims. The NPSC differentiates between foods on the basis of risk increasing nutrients (energy, saturated fatty acids, total sugars, sodium) and health-beneficial nutrients and food attributes (fibre, protein, fruit and vegetable content) for the purposes of determining which food vehicles are suitable for carrying health claims (also subject to other qualifying criteria).

National Nutrition Survey

Australia's National Nutrition Survey (NNS) was conducted in 1995 and provides the most recent nutritional profile of Australians at the national level. More recent but limited Australian self reported dietary information is available from the results of the 2004/05 National Health Survey (NHS). The next Australian NNS is expected to be conducted in 2010/2011.

The Australian Government has developed a number of national public health orientated nutrition recommendations and programs to address Australia's nutrition and health. These include dissemination of scientific evidence-based nutrition information developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council; the 2007 National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey of over 4,000 children aged from 2-16 years; and a set of guidelines and resources to promote access to healthy foods in remote Indigenous communities.

Review of Trans-Fatty Acids

A review of trans-fatty acids in the Australian and New Zealand food supply was conducted in 2006. The review found that the contributions of trans fatty acids to energy intakes of Australians and New Zealanders was below the goal of 1% proposed by the World Health Organisation, and comparable to or lower than intake estimates from some countries overseas.

Based on the findings of the review it was considered that immediate regulatory intervention was not required and that non-regulatory measures be undertaken to reduce the levels of trans-fatty acids in the Australian and New Zealand food supply.

CANADA

Nutritional issues continue to be a priority for the government of Canada, particularly as they relate to non-communicable diseases. In December 2007 updated nutrition labelling requirements became mandatory for all pre-packaged foods. A government of Canada task force on trans fat proposed a number of recommendations for consideration by the government. In June 2007 Health Canada adopted the recommendations with respect to the amount of trans fat in foods. These recommendations from the Trans Fat Task Force were two-fold: (a) Limit the trans fat content of vegetable oils and soft, spreadable margarines to 2% of the total fat content; and (b) Limit the trans fat content for all other foods to 5% of the total fat content, including ingredients sold to restaurants. Industry has two years to achieve these limits.

NEW ZEALAND

Nutrition, physical activity and obesity still have prominent roles across the Ministry of Health and increasingly within NZFSA. Recent health monitoring surveys have indicated an increase in the prevalence of obesity for adults in the 10 years from 1996/97 to 2006/07, but the rate of increase appears to be slowing. Selective nutritional indicators such as fruit and vegetable intake and frequency of consumption for high fat, sugar and salt foods suggest ethnic and socioeconomic disparities among children and adults. Healthy-Eating Healthy Action (HE-HA) is the official cross-government response to the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. There are a wide variety of national and regional initiatives that have been launched from this strategy, many of which can be viewed at www.moh.govt.nz/healthyeatinghealthyaction.

Of specific interest to CCNASWP, two vitamin and mineral fortification initiatives are being introduced by FSANZ, NZFSA and the Ministry of Health across the New Zealand domestic food supply. From September 2009 all bread (except unleavened and organic) will be fortified with folic acid and iodine in an attempt to curb the health consequences associated with deficiencies of these nutrients. The fortification initiatives form part of wider efforts that include educational initiatives, voluntary permissions to fortify, health claims (folic acid only) and policy on supplementation.

In response to a Health Select Committee Inquiry on Type 2 Diabetes and Obesity, NZFSA, along with the Ministry of Health are currently part-funding research into Front-of-Pack (FOP) labelling which will look at the following: whether a FOP labelling system would be likely to improve decision-making of the consumer in relation to the purchase of healthier foods in New Zealand; stakeholders' views on the implementation of FOP labelling in New Zealand and the feasibility of an FOP labelling supermarket intervention study. If feasible this would be some of the first work looking at the use of FOP labelling by consumers in a real supermarket setting, and would help to fill a research gap in this area.

NZFSA is also funding research to examine actual and potential changes to the food supply as a result of industry's response to FOP and other nutrition promotion approaches that are based on nutrient profiling systems. Preliminary results from this research are expected in late 2008. Both pieces of research will feed into significant trans-Tasman work being undertaken in this area.

Finally, in October 2008 the Ministry of Health will begin its scheduled Adult Nutrition Survey (ANS). This survey will update information from the last adult nutrition survey in 1997. The ANS is expected to gather information on the dietary habits of approximately 5,700 adults 15+ years over the next 12 months. The approach will consist of a single day 24 hour recall, a dietary habits questionnaire, anthropometry, blood pressure, blood and urine analysis

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

PNG has nutritional issues that need consideration and evaluation, which Department of Health has responsibility and have continued to address with respect to obesity, vitamin A deficiency and malnutrition problems as reflected in the general health status of the people. More awareness can prompt appropriate authorities to address the causes and effects. Clear nutritional labelling can also help consumers to decide what is good for the body.

SAMOA

Nutrition issues in Samoa: There are high rates of obesity, high blood pressure and type II diabetes amongst adults. Obesity is starting to become evident in children and the prevalence is increasing. Protein energy malnutrition is still reported occasionally in children. There are also high rates of anaemia in children and pregnant women. Dental disease is common.

Public health actions taken: The national dietary guidelines are currently being reviewed and updated; draft school nutrition standards have been developed and are currently being pilot tested; a healthy diet is promoted with emphasis on the consumption of fruit and vegetables and reducing fat, sugar and salt in the diet; appropriate infant and young child feeding is promoted with emphasis on breastfeeding and implementing "Baby Friendly Hospitals"; and the development of food standards has started.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

(This is an area, which still needs strengthening especially in a Nation like this one. There is work currently going on, but having data available and basing labelling on nutritional facts is still a major concern.) More information still needs to be obtained.

TONGA

Partnership of codex related bodies and the communities with a dynamic technical working group specializing on Nutritional issues would be the driving force in coordination responsive and sustainable actions and concerted efforts to these nutrition issues.

VANUATU

Not much is done in this area due to staff in the nutrition section not being technically involved. There is also very little knowledge on codex. Last year there has been some introduction awareness done on food fortification. However, there is a lot of emphasis put into eating more locally produced food to reduce nutritional issues.