

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Items 6, 12 & 13

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-fifth Session
Ottawa, Canada, 13-17 May 2019

(Comments from FoodDrinkEurope, ISDI and WFPHA,)

AGENDA ITEM 6: PROPOSED DRAFT GUIDELINES ON FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITIONAL LABELLING

ISDI

ISDI thanks Costa Rica (Chair) and New Zealand (Co-Chair) for chairing the eWG and for the extensive work in preparation of the Draft Guidelines on Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPNL). Below you will find comments from ISDI on the Draft Guidelines on Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPNL) at step 3.

For section 2.2 in relation to FSDU, ISDI proposes the following text:

2.2 Alcoholic beverages and certain foods for special dietary uses (footnote A), including, foods for infants and young children, formula foods for use in weight control diets (footnote B), and foods for special medical purposes (footnote C) are excluded (existing footnote 3).

FOOTNOTE A: As defined in the General Standard for the Labelling of and Claims for Prepackaged Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CODEX STAN 146-1985).

FOOTNOTE B: As defined in the Standard for Formula Foods for Use in Weight Control Diets (CODEX STAN 181-1991)

FOOTNOTE C: As defined in the Standard for Labelling of and Claims for Foods for Special Medical Purposes (CODEX

STAN 180-1991)

Existing footnote 3: Exclusions are foods that must not have FOPNL. Exemptions are where the food does not have to have FOPNL, but if it does, it does not affect its application.

WFPHA supported by CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL, IBFAN, , WOF & WPHNA

Unhealthy diets - high in sodium, saturated and trans fats, added sugars and processed and red meat, and low in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, polyunsaturated fat, and other unprocessed or minimally processed foods - are a leading cause of death and disability globally. Nutrition-related illness was estimated to cause 11 million deaths in 2017, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's Global Burden of Disease.¹

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends countries adopt front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPNL) as part of a suite of interventions to promote healthier diets, and to contribute to reducing the burden of obesity and nutrition-related disease. More than 30 FOPNL systems have already been adopted globally using a variety of approaches. They include the voluntary Health Star Rating in Australasia, the United Kingdom's traffic lights, the Nordic Keyhole and France's Nutri-Score. There is also increasing use of mandatory nutrient-specific warnings in Chile, Peru, Israel, and also under consideration in Uruguay and Canada. The objectives of FOPNL are to inform and/or guide consumers towards healthier food choices and away from unhealthy options by providing simplified information about the amounts and types of nutrients and/or ingredients in foods. They may also incentivise healthier reformulation by industry.

¹ Afshin, A., Sur, P.J., Fay, K.A., et al Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: A systematic analysis for the global burden of disease study 2017. *The Lancet* 2019.

What happens in Ottawa: From 13-17 May 2019, the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)² will begin formal negotiations on guiding principles for the development of FOPNL. Approximately 250 representatives from 60 national governments, dozens of food industry associations, and a handful of officially recognized health and consumer groups are expected to convene to significantly advance a process that began in May 2016.

Why these negotiations matter: Evidence-based, flexible Codex standards can support national governments to design strong FOPNL that are protective of health. Restrictive standards that protect industry interests can inhibit a country's ability to do so.

The undersigned groups urge the CCFL to ensure Codex guidance empowers governments to:

1. **Mandate FOPNL**, similar to Codex guidance on Back-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling made in 2012;
2. **Prevent undue industry influence** by recognising the importance of government leadership in FOPNL development, and the need for conflict of interest safeguards to facilitate input from key actors while ensuring health objectives are always prioritised over private interests;
3. **Exercise flexibility** by providing space for regulatory innovation informed by national contexts and disease burdens, recognizing that no current system is perfect and that experience and emerging independent scientific evidence will inform further improvements;
4. **Build upon the mandate provided by WHO** by acknowledging the centrality of FOPNL in recommendations for preventing diet-related non-communicable diseases;
5. **Consider** ingredients and nutrients of public health concern in FOPNL development;
6. **Avoid the "halo effect" on risky products** by allowing room to determine the scope of FOPNL depending on the type of label adopted, for example by prohibiting positive endorsements on breast-milk substitutes or alcohol, and/or ensuring nutrient-specific warnings are applied to 'sports' beverages as well as foods for infants and young children; and
7. **Specify format** to promote prominence and consumer use, for example by ensuring FOPNL appears on the principal panel and is visible to consumers without needing to pick up the package, and by requiring minimum font/image size and colour.

Agenda Item 12: LABELLING OF FOODS IN JOINT PRESENTATION AND MULTIPACK FORMATS

FOODDRINKEUROPE

General comments

Given that the document was shared very late in the process, FoodDrinkEurope does not support new work on the labelling of foods in joint presentation and multipack formats for the time being.

Agenda Item 13: FUTURE WORK AND DIRECTION OF CCFL

FOODDRINKEUROPE

General comments

FoodDrinkEurope welcomes the concept of a broad reflection of the mandate and work of the CCFL moving forward.

FoodDrinkEurope believes that Codex has played a pivotal role over the past decades in standard-setting in the food labelling area, helping to facilitate trade and ensuring consumers are adequately informed and protected. As a general point, FoodDrinkEurope would like to strongly underline that convincing scientific evidence should remain at all times the key basis for any new work that is decided to be undertaken. Failing to do so would put the credibility and reputation of Codex Alimentarius at stake.

Whilst supportive of several of the topics for potential new work that have been proposed, FoodDrinkEurope would also like to warn against a too ambitious agenda which would be inefficient and resource-draining.

² CCFL is a committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which is a joint-commission of the United Nations World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization that sets standards for trade in food that are considered authoritative by the World Trade Organization for resolving trade disputes. Codex standards function as permeable ceiling standards, not minimum standards; countries are not obliged to implement them, but may be asked to provide scientific justification if their consumer or health protection measures exceed Codex guidance. The Government of Canada has hosted and chaired the CCFL since the early 1960s.