

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING (CCFL)

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES REGARDING FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABELLING

**Electronic Working Group Chaired by Costa Rica
and Co-chaired by New Zealand**

- At the 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL43), Costa Rica and New Zealand presented a conference room document (CRD 20), which identified the lack of global consistency and guidance on simplified nutrition labelling (e.g. front-of-pack labelling) as an issue that Codex may need to consider.

Significant increase in the provision of simplified nutrition information on food labels for the purposes of improved consumer understanding to support healthier food choices.

Proliferation of different front-of-pack nutritional labelling systems could create problems for export and trade and that some global consistency in approach should be sought through the CCFL



TERMS OF REFERENCE

- At CCFL43, the Committee agreed to initiate discussions on front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPL) through an electronic working group (eWG) chaired by Costa Rica and co-chaired by New Zealand, with the following terms of reference:

i. Take stock of the current front-of-pack nutrition labelling systems existing in different countries.

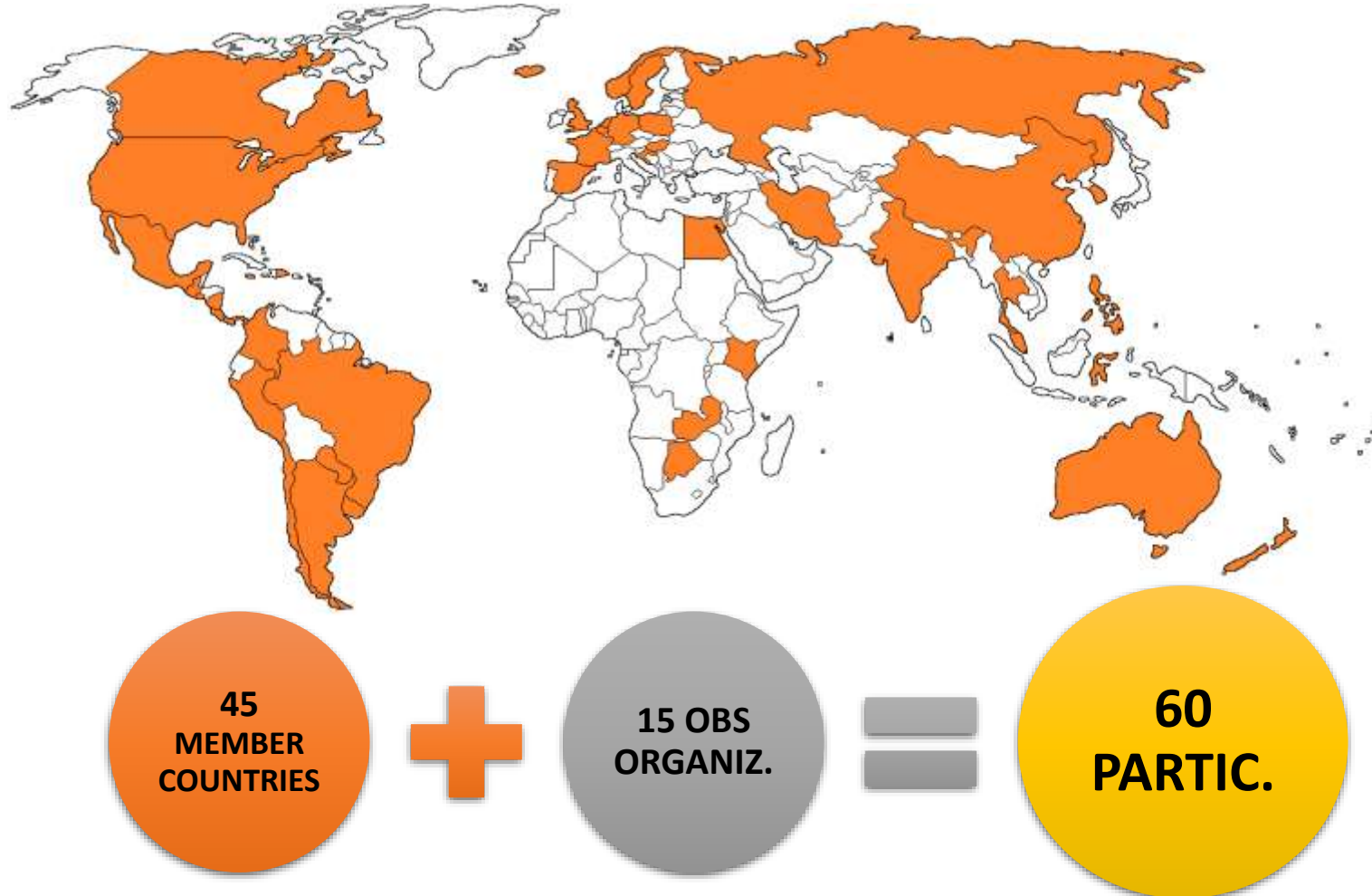
ii. Consider the need for development of global principles to underpin front-of-pack nutrition labelling.

iii. Prepare a discussion paper, taking into account the WHO work on this matter and a draft project document for consideration at the next session of the Committee.



WORK OF THE eWG

- An invitation to join the eWG was issued in June 2016.



I Discussion Paper

- Consisted of 11 questions, covering the following:
- Collection of information on all Front-Of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPL) systems either currently being used or under development in different countries.
- Whether the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling CAC/GL 2-1985 currently include provisions for FOPL.
- Whether the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling CAC/GL 2-1985 provide adequate guidance to assist Governments and industry wanting to implement FOPL.

II Discussion Paper

- Presentation of the information collected on all FOPL systems, whether they are currently being used or under development in different countries and confirm it was captured correctly.
- Clarification of the criteria used by the eWG for determining the inclusion and exclusion of FOPL systems in the stocktake document.
- Analysis of responses to first discussion paper.
- Proposed next steps for the electronic working group.



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Definition of Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPL)



- **Interpretive system:** Includes symbols, colour codes and graphic representations that facilitate interpretation by the consumer.
- **Informative (or non-interpretive system):** It only involves the transfer of some of all of the information considered relevant from the nutrient declaration, without any interpretation.

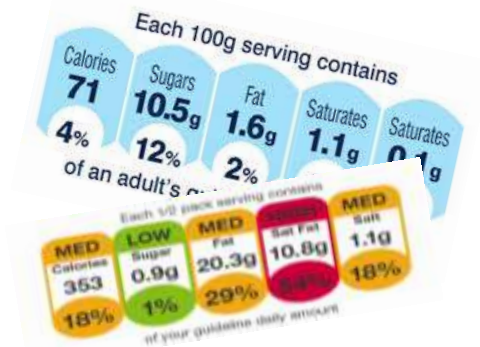
Definition of Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPL)

- The analysis of the responses from the first discussion paper raised the question of what is considered to be front-of-pack nutritional labelling (FOPL), which is defined in different ways in different parts of the world and in various publications.

Inclusion Criteria

- Symbols/graphic or textual indications that provide simplified nutrition information used on the front or principal display panel of “prepackaged foods” (as defined by the General Standard for Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985)); i.e. for retail sale to consumers

- Symbols/graphic or textual indications that provide information on the overall nutritional value of the food, or on nutrients of public health importance.



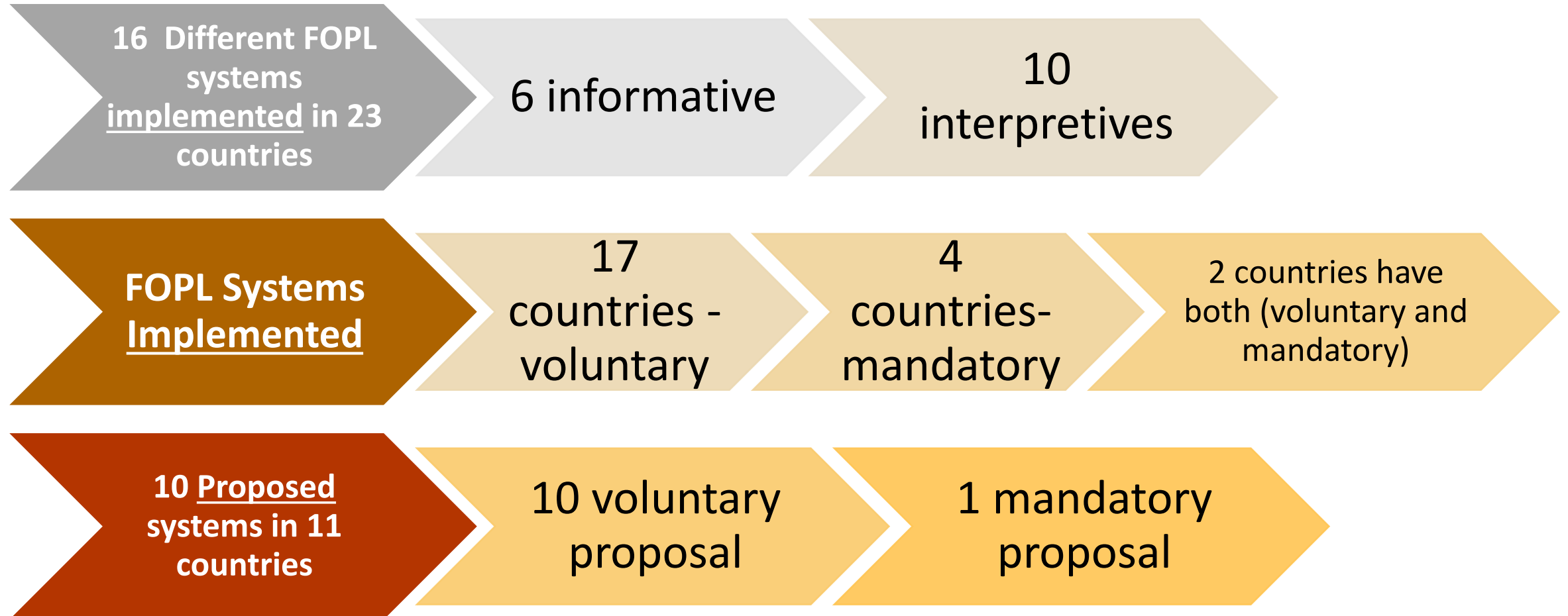
Definition of Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPL)

Exclusion Criteria

- Isolated symbols/graphic or textual indications assigned to a food based on presence, absence, reduction or fortification of a food group, single nutrient or ingredient. For example, “dairy free”, “high in calcium”, “contains wholegrain”, “gluten free”, etc.
- Symbols/graphic or textual indications which are not used on the food package. For example, shelf tags.
- Symbols/graphic or textual indications which are used only on packs not intended for retail sale to the consumer. For example, systems only used on foodservice packaging.



Stocktake of FOPL Systems



- In general, the three aspects that are most commonly evaluated are the following:

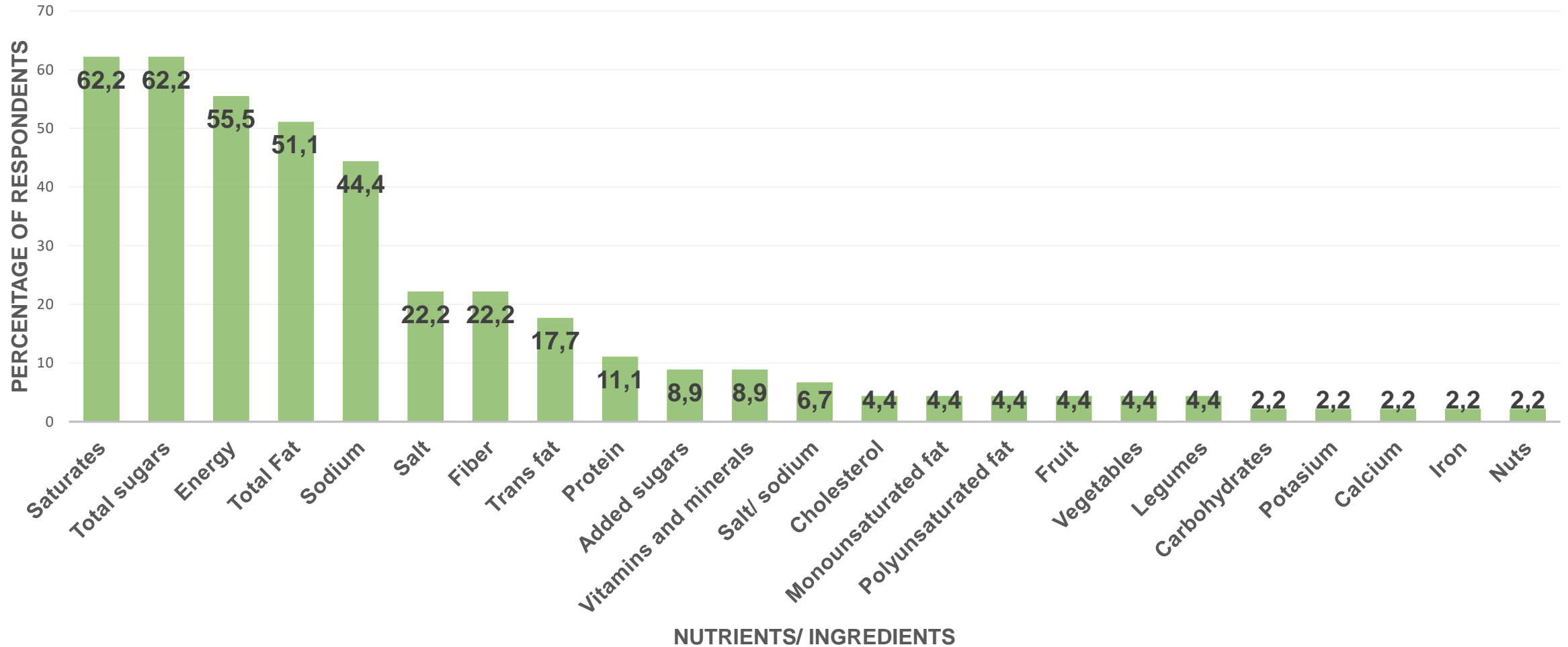
Implementation or uptake by the industry.

Compliance with the existing regulations.

Understanding/perception by the consumer.

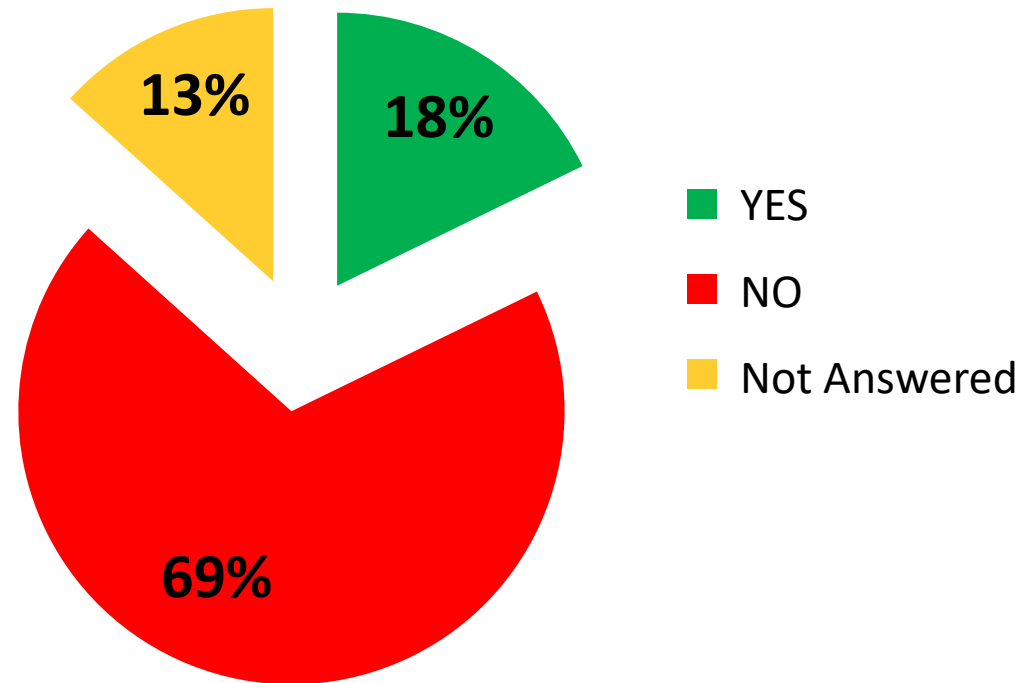
At the time of data collection, there was no documentation provided of any evaluation of the efficacy of the systems mentioned at the public health level.

Information considered as a priority in the FOPL



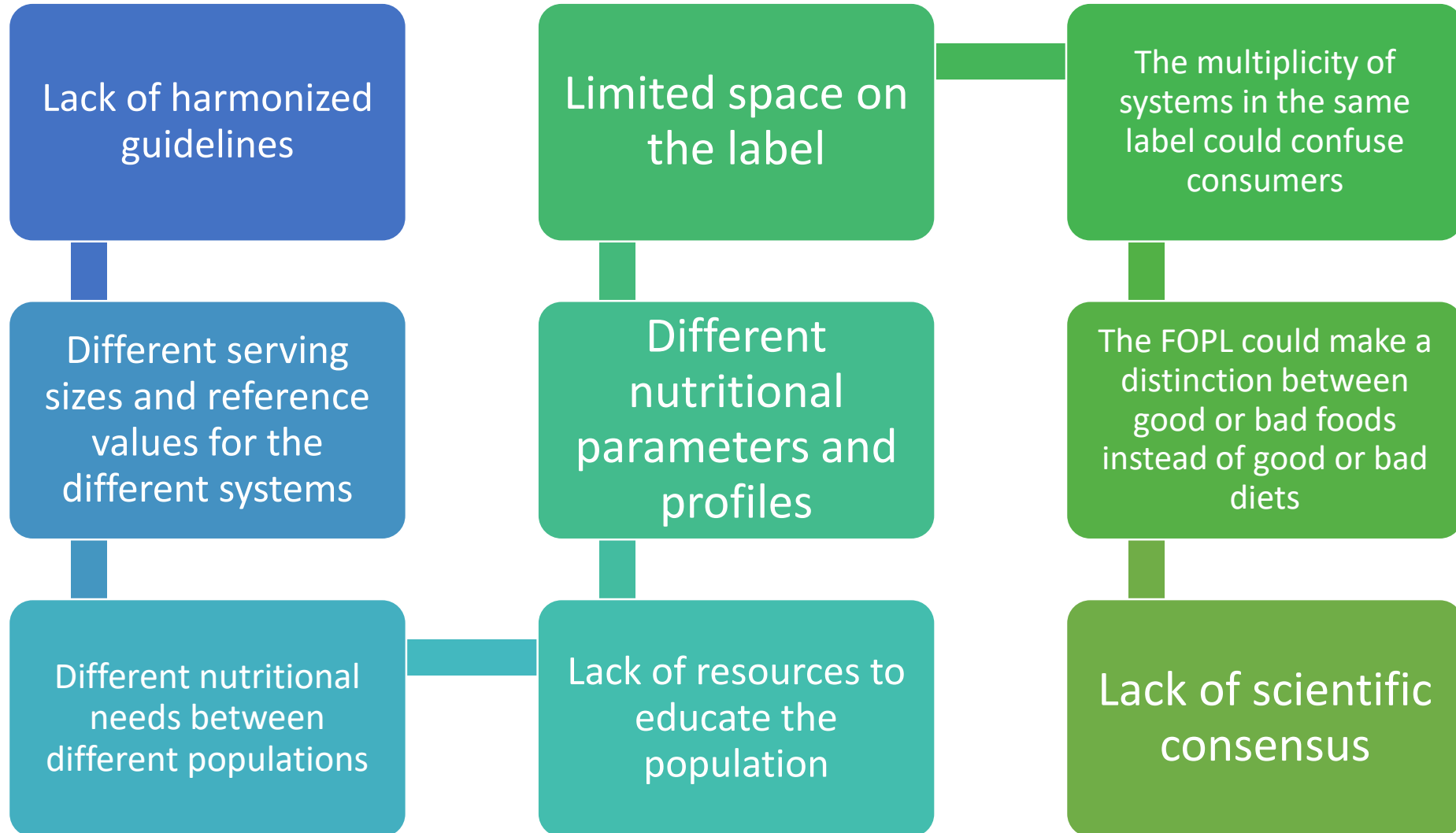
Existing guidance on FOPL in the Codex Guidelines

- Members were asked for their opinion on whether the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling* (CAC/GL 2-1985) are an appropriate guide to assist countries / organizations wishing to establish their own nutrition labelling system on FOPL

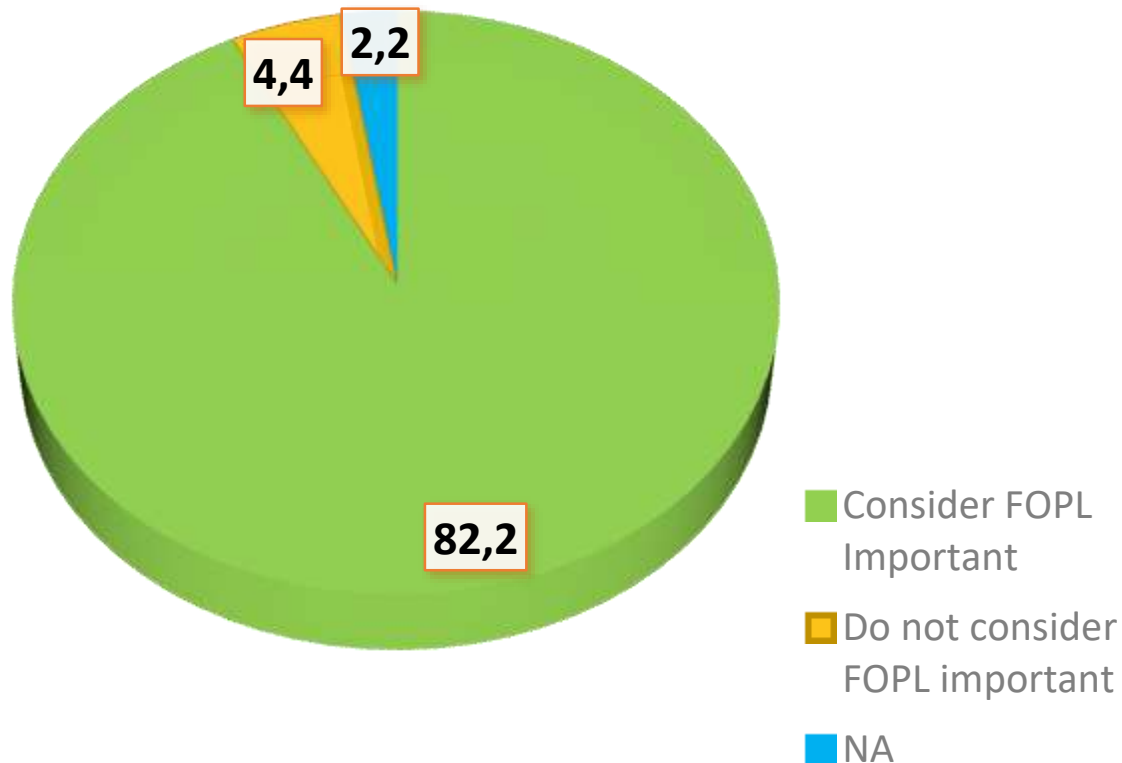


- In addition, 75.6% indicated that it would be useful to have more information.

Barriers or Limitations of FOPL



Importance of inclusion of FOPL



- The main reasons why including the FOPL was considered important were:
 - It is a quick way to inform the consumer about the content of nutrients that could be related to the occurrence of non-communicable diseases or to nutrients that benefit health.
 - It guides the selection consumers make regarding food.
 - It is a way for clearly displaying relevant information.
 - It encourages food producers to innovate and reformulate healthier foods.



CONCLUSIONS

- Based on the stocktake of FOPL systems used worldwide, significant variation in the systems could be noticed. However, there were several common elements described by members that could support the development of general scientific principles to guide countries and organizations wishing to establish such systems.
- A FOPL system, must necessarily be complemented by a process of education, awareness and communication to the consumer; because the information contained in a label does not necessarily ensure a change in the decision on food consumption.

- Given the above analysis and conclusions, the eWG recommends that the CCFL:
 - Agree to initiate new work to develop general guidelines that provide clear and transparent scientific guidance to governments, industry or other agencies wishing to implement nutrition labelling on the front of packaging and submit the attached Project Document (Appendix II) for approval by the Codex Alimentarius Commission to initiate the proposed new work.
- In addition, it is recommended that the CCFL discuss the following issues:
 - Whether a definition of FOPL for the purposes of this work be agreed, including what is and what is not considered to be FOPL.
 - Options for providing future guidance on FOPL.



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