

# **A global action network on Nutrition labelling: taking action for better informed consumers' choices in the Decade of Action on Nutrition**

**A draft for discussion – September 2018**

## Background

### *The Decade of Action on Nutrition*

In April 2016, the UN General Assembly, through its Resolution 70/259<sup>1</sup>, endorsed the ICN2 outcomes and proclaimed 2016 to 2025 the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (Nutrition Decade). The Resolution also called upon the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) “to lead the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and to identify and develop a work programme based on the Rome Declaration and its Framework for Action, along with its means of implementation for 2016-2025, using coordination mechanisms such as the Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in line with its mandate, and in consultation with other international and regional organizations and platforms.”

### *Action networks*

One of the mechanisms of implementing the commitments of the Nutrition Decade is the establishment of Action networks.

“Through the convening and catalytic roles of the Nutrition Decade, action networks will be established. These action networks are informal coalitions of countries aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to one or more action areas of the Nutrition Decade, through advocating for the establishment of policies and legislation, allowing the exchange of practices and experiences, highlighting successes and lessons learnt, and providing mutual support to accelerate implementation. Action networks will help countries implement their SMART commitments.”

“An action network may be established at the request of one or more countries, who should define the objectives, scope and initial programme of work, identify other partner countries, convene meetings and manage joint initiatives. Action networks may be regional or global, and operate under the leadership of a government institution. The UN system may support action networks, particularly through the provision of operational tools”.

“The countries convening an action network should decide on how to engage with civil society organizations, academia and the private sector, as appropriate. It is important that the action networks avoid conflicts of interest in both their membership and implementation of activities.”

### *Nutrition Labelling*

Nutrition labelling has been considered as a policy implementation tool in various official WHO documents adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA).

According to the Codex Alimentary Commission (Codex) (1) there are three elements in nutrition labelling: nutrient declarations; supplementary nutrition information; and nutrition and health claims. Nutrient declarations are standardised listings of the nutrient content of a food or beverage usually positioned on the back or side of the package. In 2013, Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259)

decision to include saturated fat, sodium and total sugars as mandatory nutrients where nutrient declaration is implemented on food packages

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Nutrition Policy Review conducted by WHO during 2016 – 2017 indicates that 103 countries are implementing mandatory nutrient declaration although it does not seem all countries are following the Codex guidelines.

With the increasing number of countries interested in implementing Front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) in recent years, Codex has now agreed to start new work to develop guidelines on FOPL as currently there is no specific Codex guidelines or guidance on FOPL as such. Therefore, as initial steps, Codex will review existing guidelines and consider key aspects, purpose and scope, and definition of FOPL among others. It was further agreed that new work should take into consideration of WHO's work on guiding principles for FOPL systems and evidence reviews on nutrition labelling that are being developed as part of the guideline development for promoting healthy diet.

#### Scope and purpose of the network

A network is established among government representatives from different world regions to promote the implementation of nutrition labelling. The network would perform the following functions:

##### *1. Host discussions on nutrition labelling*

- Exchange country experience on implementing nutrition labelling
- assess the situation on nutrition labelling in different countries, including regulatory options (i.e. mandatory vs voluntary);
- review and identify challenges faced by different countries in implementing nutrition labelling and ways in which the challenges are overcome.
- Review the types of FOPL systems that are currently being implemented or proposed
- review and assess the evidence on the effectiveness and limitations of different FOPL systems;
- identify issues and considerations for the design and approaches used in developing FOPL systems;
- assess the impact of FOPL systems on food reformulation;
- assess the impact of FOPL systems on consumers' choices.
- Inform membership on current discussions on labelling in Codex and in regional fora (EC, CARICOM, etc.)

##### *2. Develop common knowledge sharing platform, e.g.*

- Repository of documentation on international regulations and national nutrition labelling policies and legislations, including regulatory capacities required.
- Guiding principles on FOPL systems.
- Nutrient profiling system(s) used for developing FOPL systems.
- Protocols for evaluating the impacts of FOPL systems.

##### *3. Support the establishment of nutrition labelling in countries*

- Sharing technical expertise in implementing nutrition labelling, including the development of FOPL systems.
- Sharing expertise on monitoring and evaluation systems.

##### *4. Advocacy*

- Develop information materials and convene public information fora to:
  - Highlight the need for implementing mandatory nutrient declaration and values including the development of easy to understand FOPL systems. This process will facilitate consumers' understanding for dietary improvement.

- Highlight value of labelling to stimulate reformulation of food products.

#### Operation of the network

- The network is co-convened by public Authorities from Australia and France.
- The network is global, but can have regional groupings.
- Membership is open to interested government Authorities, who make commitments to implement nutrition labelling.
- UN organisations may support the network operations.
- The network may decide to interact with non-state actors, according to the needs.
- The convening public Authorities provide secretariat support and seed resources for the activities of the network (convening, technical products). The role of convener may rotate among participant countries.
- Network members develop a joint workplan.

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