

Terms of Reference

National Food Labelling Compliance Assessment and Market Survey to Identify Unhealthy Food Products Marketed to Children and Adults – Sri Lanka

1. Background and context

Unhealthy diets are a major contributor to the rising burden of diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in Sri Lanka, particularly among children and adults. Accurate, transparent, and regulatory-compliant food labelling is a critical public health measure to enable consumers to make informed dietary choices and to support national efforts to reduce population-level exposure to excess salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats.

Sri Lanka has introduced mandatory Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL) regulations using the “traffic-light” colour coding system for sugar, salt, and fat, alongside requirements for nutrient declarations under national food regulations. However, systematic national-level evidence on compliance with these regulations, the accuracy of nutrient declarations, and the extent of unhealthy food marketing through labelling practices remains limited.

In this context, the Food Control and Administrative Unit (FCAU), Ministry of Health (MoH) has formally requested technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO) to conduct a National Food Labelling Compliance Assessment and Market Survey to identify unhealthy food products marketed to children and adults and to generate evidence to strengthen regulatory enforcement and policy action.

WHO Sri Lanka will commission an external expert agency through an Agreement for Performance of Work (APW) to implement this activity under the technical oversight of the FCAU, Ministry of Health and WHO

1.1 Purpose and scope of the consultancy:

The purpose of this consultancy is to conduct a nationally representative food labelling compliance assessment and market survey to:

- Assess compliance with national food labelling regulations, including requirements for nutrient declarations, FoPL and health and nutrition claims
- Verify the accuracy of selected nutrient declarations through laboratory analysis
- Identify unhealthy food products marketed to children and adults
- Generate evidence to inform regulatory enforcement, policy revision (if needed), and consumer protection initiatives

Selected institution should conduct this task in collaboration with the Director Environment and Occupational Health, Consultant Community Physician (Food Control Administration Unit) and National Professional Officer (FGL) WHO country office.

2. Contributors:

Food Control Administrative Unit (FCAU), Ministry of Health and World Health Organization are the main contributors. The survey will be commissioned and coordinated by WHO Country Office Sri Lanka.

3. Objectives of the Consultancy

3.1 General Objective

To generate robust national evidence on food labelling compliance and unhealthy food marketing on food packaging in Sri Lanka to support regulatory action and NCD prevention.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- To assess compliance of packaged food products with mandatory Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL) and nutrient declarations requirements (whether they are displayed on all prepackaged food products / all foods displaying FOPL logos / all foods making health or nutrition claims).
- To validate selected mandatory nutrient declarations (e.g., sugar, salt, fat) through laboratory testing (declared levels of saturated fats, sugars or sodium tested, to verify whether they align with the FOPL logos displayed on the products).
- To validate selected nutrient declarations (e.g., preservatives, colours and flavour enhancers) through laboratory testing.
- To identify misleading, inaccurate, or non-compliant labelling practices, particularly for foods commonly consumed by children and adults.
- To provide actionable recommendations to strengthen food labelling enforcement and policy implementation.

4. Scope of Work

The consultancy will include, but not be limited to, the following components:

4.1 Food Categories

Assessment will cover packaged food products commonly consumed by children and adults, including but not limited to:

- Breakfast cereals
- Biscuits and bakery products
- Instant noodles
- Carbonated and non-carbonated non-alcoholic beverages
- Children's milk formulas and milk powders
- Flavoured and malted milk products
- Confectionery
- Extruded snack foods

Refer to the annexure 5 attached.

4.2 Geographic Coverage

- Nationwide coverage across all provinces of Sri Lanka
- Sampling from major supermarket chains, retail outlets, and local markets to ensure national representativeness

5. Methodology

The selected agency will propose a detailed methodology aligned with WHO technical guidance and Ministry of Health (MoH) requirements, covering the following phases:

Phase 5.1: Study Design and Tool Development.

1. Develop or adopt used study protocols from similar studies in other countries, including sampling framework, product selection criteria, and data-collection tools
2. Define clear and transparent criteria for selection of food products for laboratory analysis, ensuring representation of priority food categories consumed by children and adults
3. Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for market data collection, label data extraction, and sample handling
4. Submit the study protocol, sampling framework, tools, and SOPs to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and approval prior to implementation

Phase 5.2: Data Collection and Laboratory Analysis

1. Conduct a national market survey and systematic extraction of food label information, including Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL) and nutrient claims
2. Collect food product samples following approved sampling and chain-of-custody procedures
3. Conduct laboratory analysis of selected nutrients (e.g. sugars, salt, fats, colours, preservatives) in a government-recognized and/or accredited public/private laboratory, in coordination with the FCAU Ministry of Health, allowing for amendments and revisions to the laboratory component, guided by FCAU as needed (See the Annexure attached)
4. The selected Lab should indicate their experience in the above methodology through indicating the number of samples tested for each nutrient or ingredient for the past one year
5. Ensure adherence to standardized testing methods, quality assurance, and quality control procedures consistent with national and international standards
6. Maintain proper documentation of laboratory protocols, test results, and validation processes

Phase 5.3: Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. Analyse compliance of food products with national FoPL and nutrient declaration regulations
2. Compare laboratory test results with declared label information to identify inaccuracies, misleading claims, and regulatory non-compliance
3. Identify types / patterns of marketing used on food packaging, with particular focus on unhealthy food products in the categories listed in 4.1
4. Generate evidence-based findings to support regulatory enforcement and policy action

Phase 5.4: Reporting and Dissemination

1. Prepare draft and final technical reports summarizing methodology, findings, and recommendations
2. Present findings to the Ministry of Health, WHO, and key national stakeholders
3. Organization and conduct of a national dissemination workshop to share results and policy-relevant recommendations

5. Duration and Timeline

- Total duration: 6 months
- Start date: 11 May 2026
- End date: 11 November 2026

Specific area of work	Duration
Produce a study plan, design and develop related tools and submit it to Technical Advisory committee for approval	Within 20 days after signing the contract.
Data collection and conduction of laboratory analysis	By 31 st May 2026
Data analysis and interpretation	By 30 th September 2026
Disseminate the findings to key national level stakeholders	By 31 st October 2026
Submission of a printed survey report, 2 policy briefs, PowerPoint presentations, final technical report and statement of expenditure with all original invoices to the WHO	By 30 November 2026

6. Deliverables:

The Agency will be responsible for delivering the following:

1. Study protocol, sampling plan, and data-collection tools, based on existing protocols and tools, adapted for the Sri Lankan market by the Agency and approved by WHO.
2. Interim progress report
3. Final national survey report
4. Policy brief(s) with actionable recommendations for regulatory strengthening
5. PowerPoint presentation summarizing key findings and recommendations

7. Reporting Requirements:

Monthly updates and touch base meetings – the contacting partner should share monthly updates of activities taken place to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and as required organize touch base meetings to discuss any issues/concerns.

Adhere to WHO's Reporting standards - The contacting partner is required to adhere to WHO Reporting Standards.

8. Performance monitoring:

Performance monitoring will be done by the TAC.

9. Ownership of the work:

In accordance with WHO policy, all ownership, rights, title and interest in all data, information, deliverables, protocols, plans, tools, reports, presentations and any other materials in any form (agreement materials') created under this agreement will vest solely on creation in WHO and FCAU. The consultant agency may use the agreement materials for the sole purpose of performing this agreement and may not otherwise use, share, publish, present or exploit the agreement materials in any manner.

10. Competencies, qualifications and experience:

Mandatory Experience

1. Required Expertise:

The survey team is expected to consist of following expertise.

- a. At least one lead expert in public (community) health with MD/PhD in Public Health), Having more than one expert is an added advantage
- b. Expertise in Food Technology
- c. Expertise in Nutrition
- d. Expertise in Analytical Chemistry

2. Laboratory / Institutional Requirements:

- a. An institution having capability to coordinate and conduct operational surveys and market research.
- b. Institution should have or be able to connect with laboratory having capabilities to test Salt Sugar and Fat content,
- c. Should be considered as a reference lab, either government-recognized and/or accredited public/private laboratory. (The details of requirements of testing are provided in Annexure 5).

Desirable Experience:

1. Additional desirable expertise within the team:

- a. Expertise in Statistics
- b. Expertise with legal background
- c. Expertise of writing analytical reports

2. Experience of the team based on their individual CVs

- a. Experience in conducting national-level surveys or market assessments
- b. Experience in operational reviews/ analyses related to food labelling, nutrition, public health, or other NCD risk factors (tobacco or alcohol products)
- c. Capacity to manage laboratory testing through accredited facilities
- d. Experience in carrying out other assignments related to nutrition or food labelling
- e. Experience in working with UN agencies and government agencies

11. Funds disperse plan:

Description of deliverables	Fund %
Signing of Contract	None
Submission of approved study protocol, sampling plan, and data-collection tools	(25% installment)
Submission of the interim report after collecting data in 50% of the sample	(50% installment)
Submission of final survey report, final technical report, policy briefs, Power point presentations, SOE and all original invoices	(25% installment)

12. Evaluation of the proposals and Selection of a contracture to conduct the survey:

WHO expects the eligible contractors to propose the best and most cost-effective methods. Selection will be a one stage process based on RFP (Request of Proposals)

Eligibility criteria of the contractor:

The selected contractor shall be a government institution, private sector entity, and/or established team of individuals with proven experience of conducting research and surveys.

Proposals will be evaluated after the closing date based on the following criteria.

Technical Weighting:	70% of total evaluation
Financial Weighting:	30% of total evaluation

The technical evaluation of the proposals will include:

- The proposed methodology for study design and tool development, Data Collection and Laboratory Analysis, Data Analysis and Interpretation and Reporting and Dissemination.
- The timeframe for the project (Gantt chart aligned to the given time frame)
- The experience of the institution in carrying out related projects.
- the extent to which requirements and expectations have been satisfactorily addressed (as mentioned in no. 10)
- Cost for sample (Including mandatory tests) for each food category shall be mentioned

- The successful contractor is expected to
- Finalize the methodology and data-collection tools incorporating the comments from the TAC
 - Conduct the survey and laboratory experience
 - Report on the progress to the TAC monthly
 - Present and discuss preliminary results with the TAC and consider relevant feedback
 - Present the draft survey report to the TAC and adjust as feedback of TAC

13. Submission of Quotation:

Interested partners/ organizations are requested to submit **separate** technical and financial proposals for evaluation. **Technical and financial proposals to be submitted to: (Subject: National Food Labelling Compliance Assessment and Market Survey to Identify Unhealthy Food Products Marketed to Children and Adults – Sri Lanka)**

14. Instructions for bidders

Bidders should follow the instructions set forth in the RFP form in the submission of their proposal to WHO. WHO will not be responsible for any proposal which does not follow the instructions.

15. Language

The proposal prepared by the bidder, and all correspondence and documents relating to the proposal exchanged by the bidder and WHO shall be written in the English language.

16. Place of performance:

The place of performance of the work under the Contract will be the contractor's own office while travel may be required accordingly.