



ICMR- National Institute of Nutrition



Let's Fix Our Food

E-Dialogue Series



Date - 29th July, 2022

Time - 3.00 pm to 5.30 pm(IST)

E-dialogue
#No.3

Front of Pack Nutrition labeling (FOPNL) for promoting healthy food choices among adolescent consumers



Overweight and obesity in children and adolescents are serious and growing health concerns across the world in both rich and poor countries, which threaten the basic rights of children. Globally unhealthy diets are considered the main reason for the increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity as well as non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, and the like. Rapid urbanisation is greatly influencing people's food consumption patterns with inclinations toward packaged and processed food items and it is more evident among adolescents and youth. Varieties of processed and ultra-processed foods, which contain trans-fats, high salt, sugar, saturated fats, and refined carbohydrates, are available in the market, making it hard for consumers to identify and select the ones that are nutritious.

Measures to reduce consumption of unhealthy foods

Different forms of food labelling, taxation on High Fat Salt Sugar (HFSS) foods, and changes in marketing and advertisement policies are some measures undertaken by different countries to decrease the consumption of unhealthy foods. For the past few years, in India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been pushing for introducing interpretative food labels under the front-of-pack labelling (FoPL) regulations based on their salt, sugar, and fat content. In 2018 FSSAI came up with draft regulations but it is not yet implemented for various reasons. FSSAI and other

Labelling, FoPL and adolescent food choices

Adolescence is a critical period when they develop the autonomy of making independent decisions on food purchases. Their food choices are often influenced by product advertisements, peer pressure and media or parental influences. It's a vital stage of establishing health behaviours. Although the nutrient content declaration is mandatory on the back of labels studies show that it is hardly read by the Positioning nutritional information on the back or side of labels leads to poor visibility and poor grasp of the nutritional information required to make healthy food choices. The purpose of FoPL is to empower adolescent consumers to make healthier choices by providing nutrition information in a straightforward and simple way through icons or schemes. Studies in different countries have shown the efficacy of warning labels (WLs) or other formats of FoPLs since they easily catch consumers' attention, are easily understood and help make quick decisions in a market scenario. In addition, WLs have proven to elicit a perception of risk and modify purchase intentions and ultimately discourage the consumption or purchase of unhealthy food products. However, earlier studies have shown that label reading is very scarce among adolescents. Studies on the understanding, acceptability and food labelling literacy among adolescents in the Indian context is limited. There is a window of opportunity for policymakers to implement FoPL coupled with intense nutrition education to help adolescents identify healthy foods and discourage the consumption of unhealthy processed foods.

Agenda of the current e-dialogue

Given this background, the current e-dialogue attempts to examine the global scenario, the lessons learnt, food label literacy and nutrition literacy among adolescents; what needs to be done to develop the necessary aptitude and abilities to help navigate our current food environment to make FOPLs more user friendly to our adolescent and young consumers. What measures are immediately required to support children and adolescents in building the label reading skills and how to advocate for and act as spokespeople and ambassadors for the introduction of the FoPL in the country

