

Experiences advocating for Mandatory Front of Package Nutrition Labelling

Juanita James

President, Antigua and Barbuda Diabetes Association



Background and Introduction

- Standards in Antigua and Barbuda are voluntary and discussions on mandatory standards have been limited
- In 2016 the Antigua and Barbuda Bureau of Standards and Inter-American Institute on Agriculture, IICA, conducted a workshop aimed at building capacity among agro-processors about labelling their products and increasing knowledge of the requirements of standards for labelling of pre-packaged foods
- Agro-processors advised to provide information on list of ingredients, best before date and to start looking at nutrition facts for their products; sample labels produced.
- Presentation on Nutrition Facts on Food Labels

Process for Revision of Standards for Labelling of pre-packaged foods

- Member of Technical Committee, National Working Group and Mirror Committee
- Participated in review of and comments on Working Draft
- A representative from the Working Group participated in 1st Face-to-face meeting in Guyana in September 2018- draft standard developed
- Draft standard reviewed by national technical committee/working group
- Comments with justification submitted to Regional Technical Sub-Committee, RTSC

Process

- Draft amended based on comments from Member States
- Draft reviewed by Working Group
- Circulation of draft to stakeholders in preparation for national consultation
- National consultation - half day workshop
 - Fairly good level of participation by wide cross section of stakeholders including private sector
 - No decision reached about preferred model for FOPL
 - Concerns about the cost of new labels and fact that most pre-packaged foods are imported

Process

- Working group reviewed comments and justifications from National consultation for submission to RTSC
- Regional meeting in Suriname May 2019 - request to postpone FOPL in current review of standards



Challenges/Issues

- Time constraints - limited time for consultation; preparation by stakeholders could be improved
- Inadequate evidence provided to inform decision during national consultation on preferred model of FOPL
- Request to postpone FOPL in current review of standards for Labeling of Pre-packaged Foods - not in keeping with position of CARICOM Heads of Governments Communiqué of 2018 which declared FOPL as priority; also FOPL would support other policies to reduce intake of SSBs and prevention of childhood obesity and NCDs

Opportunities

- Source and share information to support FOPL Chilean model (**assisted by HCC**)
- Share information with Working Group and others on decision of CARICOM heads of governments re: FOPL as Priority
- Increase awareness of Labeling of pre-packaged foods and FOPL in particular as well as other policies being promoted to address childhood obesity and NCDs e.g. Taxation of SSBs, promoting healthier school environments including banning or restricting sale of SSBs and unhealthy foods in schools

Recommendations

- Circulation of draft document earlier to stakeholders to promote review prior to the national consultation
- Full day for consultation to allow more time for overview and discussion
- Keep relevant Ministers and stakeholders informed
- Increase public awareness, aim to build public support - share experiences and evidence, solicit views of the public on Nutrition Labelling, FOPL

Thank
you!!