The Heart Foundation of Jamaica

- Advocating for FOPL

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Heart Foundation of Jamaica
GLOBAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

POLICY PRIORITIES

- Sugary drinks tax (advocacy, awareness, policy support)
- Front of Package Labelling (work with BSJ and MOH)
- Marketing of sugary drinks to children (Broadcasting Commission)
- Support for healthy foods in schools (work with MOH and MOEYI)
Background
Food Labelling in Jamaica

• Adopted the CARICOM Regional Standard as a Jamaican Standard JS CRS 5: 2010 *Jamaican Standard Specification for Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*.

• Nutritional labelling (facts panel)
  o voluntary but compulsory for foods/beverages where a health or nutrition claim is made

• Various labelling formats in the country; many imported products
Background

Food Labelling in Jamaica

• Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) – Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries (MICAF)

• Development & adoption process requires final approvals by the BSJ board & MICAF

• National Labelling Technical Committee/Mirror Committee – national stakeholders

• Representation on the Regional Labelling Technical Committee
Activities/Successes

- Joined the Labelling committee meeting
- Contributed to the comment process providing scientific evidence for comments
- Proposal to move FOPL to nutrition labelling standard:
  - Got committee members to support our voting position not to move
  - Ensured all stakeholders voted
- Education & sensitization – grassroots; FOPL Fact Sheet
- Advocacy – meetings with MDAs
- Research partners - counterarguments
- Consumer group added as NGO partner
Front of package labelling consultations
Ongoing industry opposition

Hard on small companies
- Cost to rebrand/ relabel
- Blacklisting of products
- Impact on sales
- May cause job losses

Trade implications
- Not aligned to international partners
- Not aligned with CODEX
- May create a barrier to trade

Alternative science
- No basis for FOP labelling
- We need sugar in our bodies
- There should be balance – people have different needs
- Sugar in foods is as much problem as drinks

Preferences
- Prefer USA/UK model over Chilean model (black octagon)
- Adopt traffic light used by UK - more attractive & less solemn
- Self regulation
Counter arguments

**Not aligned to our international trading partners, CODEX**
- FOP warning labels approved by other countries (Peru, Uruguay, Canada, Isreal)
- Being considered at the CODEX level
- The USA is a top trading partner for Jamaica, Chile and Brazil (food product import & export) *World Bank, 2017

**Cost to rebrand/relabel/impact on sales/market appeal**
- Rebranding is done for other purposes (e.g. sporting events) and in keeping with labelling requirements from other jurisdictions
- Obesity & NCD rates continue to increase; balance of cost of healthcare

**The Traffic light label & self regulation**
- FOP warning labels were better able to help consumers correctly identify products with high content of unhealthy nutrients compared to traffic light
- Chilean FOP warning labels have been effective in shifting consumption behavior
- Studies have shown self-regulation is ineffective
March 2019
Ongoing industry opposition - Front of package labelling

“Format being pushed on local businesses by the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) and the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) is based on one used by Chile and Brazil, with which Jamaica’s trade in real terms is minuscule” – JMEA Executive
No need for alarm as regional labelling standard is being revised, said BSJ

Saturday, May 04, 2019

“The final standard to be implemented, it said, will be based on the consensus among the various stakeholders in Jamaica, and reiterated its commitment to the consultative process in standards development, locally and regionally.”
• Balance of representation (industry vs other groups) at Committee & Board level
  – public authorities/health
  – scientists/professional institutions
  – academia

• Mirror committee operations
  – Process of voting (one stakeholder group should have one vote); consensus
  – National positions e.g. proposal to move FOPL to nutrition labelling standard

• Delays in the process e.g. proposal to move FOPL to nutrition labelling standard
• Influence & lobbying: coordinated letters to agencies
• Evidence based
Post campaign evaluation July 2019
The masses agree.....

• 1500 adults (18-55)

• 55% - it takes too much time to interpret the nutrition facts panel.

• 8 out of 10 - strongly agree on the policy requiring clear warning labels on the front of food and beverage packages and warn consumers when products are high in sugar, salt or fats as a way of reducing obesity in Jamaica.

92% support front-of-package warning labels on food and drinks as part of the government’s plan to promote a healthier diet in Jamaica.
Strengthening national processes

• Understanding the standards development process
  o Consensus, roles, process

• Participating and encouraging a balanced representation of stakeholders participation
  o Academia, Consumer, NGO, regulatory, industry

• Maintain partnerships with key groups and stakeholders

• Show up and provide evidence

• Public education – fact sheets, campaigns, outreach, forums

• Strengthen counter arguments
  ✓ Use evidence base
THANK YOU