

**Minutes of the Stakeholders' meeting on Front of Pack Labelling held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

A meeting with stakeholders to decide remaining issues related to 'Front of Pack Labelling' was held under the Chairmanship of CEO, FSSAI on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 at 03:30 PM. Members from industry associations, consumer organisations, Scientific Panel on Labelling and Claims/Advertisements and WHO participated through virtual mode. List of participants is at *Annexure-A*.

2. CEO, FSSAI initiated the meeting with a short presentation on the journey of development of FOPL in India and the decisions taken in the last stakeholders' meeting held on 30.06.2021 under the then Chairperson, FSSAI. He informed the stakeholders that, based on the decisions taken in the said meeting, the Scientific Panel undertook the task of review of food categories and thresholds for FOPL and secondly, a national level survey was commissioned through IIM, Ahmedabad to analyze major FOPL models that are available across the globe with the objective to identify an FOPL which is easy to understand and also induces behavioral change of Indian consumers. Thereafter, Advisor (Science and Standards) presented the global scenario of FOPL including WHO Models, thresholds/basis for various models implemented in different countries and recommendations of the Scientific Panel. He informed that the Scientific Panel has recommended thresholds for two categories, i.e. Food and Beverages, based on the prevalent global models for ease of implementation. He further presented the thresholds recommended by the Panel, which inter-alia includes thresholds for positive nutrients also, in case of summary ratings. The recommendations of the Panel are at *Annexure-B*.

3. Following this, representatives from IIM, Ahmedabad and Dexter Consultancy Pvt. Ltd. made a detailed presentation on the findings of the survey. The presentation included literature review on FOPL, study design, sampling criteria and findings/analysis of the data sets. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) was carried out on a nationally representative sample of 20,564 respondents covering all major states of India who were randomized to one of the six groups, i.e. No FOPL, Health Star Rating, Nutriscore, Warning label, Multiple traffic lights and Monochrome GDA. 62% of the respondents were contacted physically and 38% through video calls on face-to-face interactions. The quality controls undertaken throughout the survey to ensure robustness of the data were also mentioned. The preference of FOPL models amongst respondents in terms of age, occupation, label-reading behavior and knowledge on morbidities of the respondents were also presented. Based on the analysis of the data, IIM A recommended HSR over other models for achieving a careful combination of the dual objectives of ease of identification and understanding; and change of purchase behavior of Indian consumers. The presentation was followed by an interactive session in which IIM A faculty addressed queries raised by the participants. The presentation made by IIM A is at *Annexure C*.

4. After detailed deliberations on the following three major issues, decisions were taken as under:

a) **Thresholds and Number of categories:**

With respect to the thresholds, nearly all stakeholders sought additional time for comments as they intended to analyze the effect of these thresholds after subsuming of sub-category wise thresholds. They further added that different thresholds may be required for dairy products in specific, considering the nature of these products. The representatives from consumer organizations as well as WHO stated that the levels are quite high in comparison with the earlier draft notification.

It was decided to share the recommendations of the Scientific Panel with the stakeholders who may provide their comments on the same to FSSAI by 02nd March, 2022, which will be further examined by the Panel. With respect to the comment regarding high level of thresholds, it was clarified that the proposed levels are in alignment with models implemented in other countries and WHO Population Nutrient Intake Goals recommendations. Considering that the country is embarking on FOPL for the first time, thresholds may be initially fixed as proposed and reviewed later based upon experience over the initial years of implementation. With respect to setting thresholds for dairy category separately, the Chair informed that majority of dairy products are proposed to be exempted from the declaration of FOPL, as they were in the earlier FSSAI draft notified in 2019. Nonetheless, he advised the industry to provide collated comments and globally available data for this or any other category for consideration by the Panel.

**Decision(s):** The presentation regarding recommendations of the Scientific Panel shall be shared with stakeholders, who may then like to submit their comments by 02<sup>nd</sup> March, 2022. The Scientific Panel may consider creation of additional categories for dairy or any other products, besides 'Food' and 'Beverages'. The Panel would also consider submissions made regarding the proposed thresholds.

b) **Type/Format of FOP Label:** HSR has come out as the recommended FOPL format for Indian consumers based on the IIM-A's survey report. The stakeholders requested for sharing the IIM report for a detailed assessment. IIM, Ahmedabad agreed to share the power point presentation made by them and informed that the report will be shared after finalization.

Mr. George Cheriyan from CUTS International and Mr. Amit Khurana, CSE opposed the recommendation for use of HSR Model in India due to the reasons that health star ratings are taken with a positive connotation and do not meet the intention of FOPL regarding warning for negative nutrients, which may be overwhelmed by positive nutrients in the algorithm design for HSR. Mr. Ashim Sanyal, Consumer Voice also informed that AIIMS-UNC is also carrying out a study on the FOPL, the report of which is also expected shortly. It was suggested that FSSAI may also await the findings of AIIMS report, in order to take any further decision on the format.

The industry associations appreciated the study conducted by IIM Ahmedabad and expressed willingness to go along with their recommendations, as was decided in the meeting dated 30.06.2021.

Some participants raised a point that the HSR format used in IIM A study did not have the nutrient specific information portion and was a modified version of HSR. It was clarified that as per the official document on HSR, FBOs are encouraged to provide nutrient specific information but it is not mandatory to do so. HSR was taken as a summary assessment FOPL in the study as against nutrient specific models such as Warning Labels and Multiple Traffic Lights. Moreover, per serve percentage contribution of nutrients as a percentage of RDA would be available on the back of the pack label from July, 2022, as provided in the FSS (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020.

It was pointed out that in the meeting on 30th June, 2021 it had been decided that a reputed institution like IIMs may be engaged to carry out a study of FOPL formats to identify ease of understanding and behavioural change of Indian consumers on a national level. All stakeholders had unanimously agreed to go along with the recommendations arrived at in such a study. Minutes had been circulated accordingly and no dissenting note had been received. In view of this, the recommendation made by IIM Ahmedabad after a detailed survey should be accepted. However, Mr. George Cherian, Mr. Amit Khurana, and later on Mrs S Saroja, ED CAG through email expressed their disagreement with HSR system, which was duly noted.

**Decision(s):** It was decided that the study conducted by IIM, Ahmedabad has the advantage of a large representative sample size and robust data. It would not be proper to discard the preference of more than 20,000 representative Indian consumers ascertained through a direct survey on the basis of the opinion of consumer organizations or industry associations. HSR may be incorporated in the draft regulations and the stakeholders may provide their comments on the same as per due procedure.

c) **Time period for transition from Voluntary to Mandatory:** The Scientific Panel recommended voluntary implementation from 2023 and a transition period of 4 years for making the FOPL mandatory.

The Consumer organizations opined that the FOPL should be made mandatory right from the inception considering the rising status of NCDs in the country. Representative from WHO also made a similar point and suggested that at the most three years may be given for such transition. The industry associations suggested phased approach to move from voluntary to mandatory declaration of FOPL.

**Decision(s):** Based on the deliberations, it was decided that an initial period of four years, as recommended by the Scientific Panel, may be proposed for voluntary implementation of FOPL and the same may be incorporated in the draft regulations. The stakeholders may provide their comments on the same as per the due procedure.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

**List of Participants:**

1. Ms. Varsha Yadav, FICCI
2. Ms Meetu Kapur, Executive Director, CII
3. Mr Kajal Debnath, DFM Foods Ltd.
4. Ms Mili Bhattacharya, Coca Cola
5. Mr. Vijay Gaur, Head Regulatory Affairs, Danone India
6. Dr Richa Pritwani, Dabur
7. Dr Sangeeta Chadha, HUL
8. Mr. Krishna Kumar Joshi, ITC Ltd
9. Ms. Parna Das Gupta, Director Regulatory and Government Affairs-South Asia-Kelloggs
10. Mr. Zafar Khan, Mondelez India
11. Ms Mani Mishra, Mother Dairy
12. Ms. Shreya Pandey, PepsiCo Holding Pvt Ltd. AIFPA
13. Dr. Anirudha Chhonkar, Head Regulatory Advocacy, Nestle India Ltd.
14. Mr. Vikas Jain, PMV Nutrients
15. Dr. Neelu Khurana, DGM-QA, Haldirams
  
17. Mr. Shaminder Singh, Pepsico.
18. Mr. George Cherian, Director, CUTS International.
19. Prof. Bejon Kumar Misra, Founder, Healthy You Foundation
20. Ms. Saroja Iyer, Executive Director, Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group, Chennai
21. Mr. Ashim Sanyal, CEO, Consumer Voice
22. Mr. Amit Khurana, Director, CSE
23. Dr. Rachita Gupta, WHO
24. Prof. Arvind Sahay, IIM Ahmedabad
25. Prof. Ranjan Ghosh, IIM Ahmedabad
26. Mr. Rahul Ajay Sanghvi, Dexter Consultancy Pvt. Ltd,

**Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

1. Sh. Ashish V. Gawai, Director

**FSSAI Officials:**

1. Sh. Arun Singhgal, CEO, FSSAI- in the Chair
2. Ms. Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director (CS)
3. Dr. N. Bhaskar, Advisor (Science and Standards)
4. Shri Vikas Talwar, Deputy Director (RCD)
5. Shri P. Karthikeyan, Joint Director (Regulations/Codex)
6. Ms. Kriti Chugh, AD (RCD)
7. Mr. Balaji, TO (RCD)
8. Ms. Manpreet Kour, TO (Standards)
9. Ms. Hiya Pandey, TO (Standards)

### **Expert Members:**

1. Dr K. Madhavan Nair, Scientist-E (Rtd.), Micronutrient Research Group Department of Biophysics, National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR), Hyderabad.
2. Dr Asna Urooj, Professor, Department of Studies in Food Science and Nutrition, Manasagangotri, University of Mysuru, Mysuru.
3. Dr Bhavesh Modi, Associate Professor, GMERS Medical College, Civil Hospital, Gandhinagar.
4. Dr Jagmeet Madan, National President, Indian Dietetic Association, Principal, Professor, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science, Bandra, West Mumbai.
5. Dr Nachiket Kotvally, Principal Scientist, Head, Agro Produce Processing Division, ICAR-CIAE, Bhopal.
6. Dr Seema Puri, Associate Professor, Dept. of Nutrition, Institute of Home Economics (University of Delhi), New Delhi.
7. Dr Subba Rao M Gavaravarapu, Scientist E, ICMR- National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad.
8. Dr Sumit Arora, Principal Scientist, Dairy Chemistry Division National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), (Deemed-to-be University), Karnal.
9. Dr Sunita Chandorkar, Asst Professor, Dept of Foods and Nutrition, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The MS University of Baroda, Vadodara.
10. Ms Anuja Agarwala, Dietician, Department of Paediatrics, 3rd Floor, Academic Block (main), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Ansari Nagar, New Delhi.