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Secretary

Subcommittee on Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling)

Dear Sir/madam,

Ref: Requirement for Nutrition Labeling and Nutrition Claim

I am a professor with strong interest in health promotion and established the Centre for Health Education and Health Promotion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2000. The Centre has been engaged in research, education and community services in health promotion particularly on healthy eating amongst young people.

Non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity cancer and respiratory diseases account for over 50% of global deaths annually and nearly 50% of global burden of disease. Around 50% of premature deaths are related to health risk behaviours and majority of disease burdens and costs are due to those risk behaviours. 'Second wave' epidemic of cardiovascular disease is flowing through developing countries as result of changing lifestyles. In many developed countries, priority health-risk behaviors such as unhealthy eating habits contributing to the leading causes of mortality and morbidity later on in life are often established during youth period having greatest health impact later in their life, but the impact has been underestimated. Those diseases might not be curable but preventable. Established scientific evidence has suggested that there are major health benefits in eating more fruit and vegetables, as well as whole grain, moving from saturated animal fats to unsaturated vegetable oil-based fats, doing daily physical activity, cutting the amount of fatty, salty and sugary foods in the diet. Diet is becoming one of the major determinant factors for health. Life Course" approach to eating and physical activity should begin early in life.

We have first launched the 'Hong Kong Healthy School' programme since 1998 with the ultimate aim to create a healthy culture in schools and families. Our studies have shown that the school children from schools successfully implementing the 'Healthy Schools' programme according to guidelines have shown positive changes in certain health behaviours including the decline of consumption of unhealthy food such as fried food and high sugar content food but no significant

increase in fruits and vegetable intake. It is therefore important to improve the health literacy in nutrition and health.

Nutrition labeling can greatly facilitate students in making healthy decision on food not only for themselves but also for their families. Studies have shown that if the bioactive constituents of fruit and vegetables would be described in lay terms together with the range of effects that they have on bodily process, this would lead to increase of fruit and vegetable consumption. Therefore it is important to have standard requirement for nutrition labeling and nutrition claim to enhance healthy eating. Proper labeling would improve the health literacy of the community in making healthy choices on diet.

Nutrition labeling constitutes an important aspect of health education for students. Students learn better with life event approach. They can be taught how to read and interpret nutrition labeling in real life context. This would avoid a lot of unnecessary misconception what constitutes healthy food.

It is beyond debate and argument to lay down requirement for Nutrition Labeling and Nutrition Claim for the health of our future generation.

Thank you four your kindest attention!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AL' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Professor Albert Lee

(Professor and Director of Centre for Health Education and Health Promotion)