



The Consumer Council today (December 10) reiterated its support of a mandatory nutrition labelling regime that promotes informed consumer choice of prepackaged food products for better public health.

It is, therefore, strongly supportive of the Government's original proposal of 2003 for mandatory labelling of energy value and a set of nine core nutrients (1+9), namely, protein, carbohydrate, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars, sodium, dietary fibre, and calcium.

In addition, in view of the scientific research on the effect of trans fat on cardiovascular health and rising public concern over these ingredients in many food products, the Council recommends that trans fat be also included to the list of core nutrients to be labelled under the new scheme.

Secondly, the Consumer Council is adamant that the Government should maintain its original proposal on the presentation of nutrient content to be unified as per 100g (for solid) or per 100ml (for liquid) of food.

The Council attaches great importance to the provision of relevant consumer information to facilitate easy comparison between different products by consumers at the time of purchase.

In the market, different brands and models of the same category of food may label their nutrient content on different bases. For example, in the case of three cracker products, they may express their nutrient content as per 100g, 26g and 15g.

It is difficult for consumers to determine which one contains more or less of a certain nutrient or nutrients. If consumers only compare the nutrient content by the values labelled without due regard to the bases adopted, they may be misled into a wrong selection.

The Government's present proposal to allow nutrient content to be presented either as per 100g/ml or as per serving is of concern to the Council as it may cause confusion to the consumers.

The Council, therefore, strongly supports standardization in the presentation of nutrient content as per 100g/ml of food. It will encourage food manufacturers to develop and produce products with higher nutrient value, ultimately enhancing public health. In the long run, the community will benefit from it.

The Council has no objection to nutrition information presented in per serving size too but this should be optional only. Serving size information serves a useful purpose to consumers as it facilitates easy calculation of the amount of nutrients consumed, after the purchase of the product.

Lastly, the Consumer Council has reservations about the proposed small volume exemption for food products with annual sales volume of 30,000 units or below. It is not clear, amongst others, how the threshold of 30,000 units is set or how a unit is defined, how many food products in the market will be eligible for such exemption, and how it can be effectively enforced.

Issued by
Consumer Council
10 December 2007