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GAIN Report

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Australia Announces a New Voluntary Front of Pack Labeling System

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Report Highlights:

The Australian Government has announced a new voluntary front-of-pack “Health Star Rating” labeling system for Australia. Except for agreed exemptions, this system will apply to all packaged, manufactured or processed foods presented ready for sale to the customer in the retail sector in Australia. The system will be finalized over the next 12 months and then introduced as a voluntary model for a two year evaluation period. If, after that evaluation period, it is considered that there has not been ‘consistent and widespread uptake’ of front-of-pack labeling, then a mandatory approach will be necessary which would require Food Standards Australia New Zealand to go through the process to develop a new food standard.

General Information:

In December 2011, the Legislative and Government Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) agreed to the development of an interpretive front-of-pack labeling system for Australia. This was a key priority identified in the Forum response to the Food Labeling Review Report, Labeling Logic (see GAIN Report - [Review of Food Labeling Law and Policy](#), 2/28/2011).

Following a collaborative process – which included public health and consumer groups, industry and government – the Forum considered recommendations on a proposed front-of-pack food labeling (FoPL) system for Australia. On June 14, 2013 the Forum agreed to a FoPL system that, except for agreed exemptions, applies to all packaged, manufactured or processed foods presented ready for sale to the customer in the retail sector. The system will give consumers at-a-glance information about the food they are buying. Foods with more stars are a better nutritional choice. The system will also include nutrient information icons for energy (kilojoules), saturated fat, sodium (salt), sugars and can include one positive nutrient such as calcium or fiber.

The system includes:

- a star rating element and a nutrient information element;
 - the star rating being underpinned by a modified Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion (NPSC);
 - a star rating scale of ½ a star to 5 stars, with ½ star increments and a “slider” above the relevant star/half star with the corresponding number to highlight the star rating of the food;
 - the star rating being branded ‘Health Star Rating’;
 - nutrient information elements for saturated fat, sugars and sodium and one optional positive nutrient information element (e.g. calcium) relevant to the particular food; and
 - the option of including the word ‘high’ with the positive nutrient element and ‘low’ with saturated fat, sugars and sodium elements where applicable.
- an ‘energy’ icon, with the unit of measure in kilojoules; and
- an alternative FoPL approach for certain foods (e.g. smaller packages may display the energy icon with or without stars, integrated approaches for confectionery and beverages).

Implementation

The Forum recognized that further work is required to finalize some of the details of the system and that this work would be undertaken over the next 12 months led by the existing FoPL Project Committee.

The Forum agreed that the FoPL system would be implemented by:

- a tripartite (government, industry and community – public health and consumer) FoPL Overview and Advisory Committee to oversight monitoring, evaluation, social marketing and education; and
- a voluntary industry led code of practice administered by a tripartite Code Administration Committee.

The Forum also agreed that the preferred voluntary implementation model would depend on how consistent and widespread uptake is for FoPL. If voluntary implementation is found to be unsuccessful, after a two-year evaluation, a mandatory approach will be required. Should the mandatory approach become necessary, Food Standards Australia New Zealand would undertake a process to develop a food standard.

Industry roll out of the system once it is finalized will be supported by government funded social marketing and communication and education activities.

Next Steps

Over the next 12 months, the government will continue to work with key stakeholders to finalize and implement the FoPL system. This work will include: finalizing revisions to the modified NPSC; considering the treatment of dairy under the NPSC; consideration of exemptions and whether the full FoPL system can be used by confectionary and beverages; developing a style guide for application of the FoPL system; and, developing social marketing, communication and education material for consumers and industry.

It is expected that industry will start utilizing the FoPL system in approximately 12 months, following the completion of this work and amendment of the Australian Food and Grocery Council's Code of Practice for Food Labeling and Promotion.

Regular updates regarding progress of implementation will be provided via the Food Regulation Secretariat [‘Front of pack labeling’](#) website.

Proposed Front-of-Pack Label

