

## ADDRESSING DIET-RELATED NCDs THROUGH BUSINESS TO BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Food labelling

The SUN Business Network (SBN) matches the expertise of its Global Members and the needs of its national members (mostly small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) to support better nutrition. Overweight and obesity may result in diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, kill more than 40 million people each year. In order to help address this issue, SBN with the support of the George Institute for Global Health has identified a set of business-to-business (B2B) technical assistance initiatives that could contribute to the prevention of diet-related NCDs. The analysis focused on four countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Bangladesh.

### FOOD LABELLING IN LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES

SMEs should be supported to label packaged foods with their nutritional content in accordance with national guidelines. In the absence of national guidelines, food companies can follow international guidelines such as the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling. Codex recommends that the declaration of the energy value, amount of protein, available carbohydrate, fat, saturated fat, sodium and total sugars should be presented as the nutrient value per 100 grams, per 100 ml or per package if the package contains only a single portion.

Once food companies have nutritional information (usually presented on the back of the packaging), front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FoPL) should be adopted. FoPL schemes are designed to provide standardised, clear and simplified information about the nutritional contents of packaged foods. FoPL can range from summary indicators (e.g. the keyhole symbol or healthy choice logo) of products that meet or do not meet nutritional thresholds, fact-based information on nutrient content (e.g. as a percentage of an adult's recommended daily intake) and evaluative or interpretative



# The more stars, the healthier.

labelling systems (e.g. a traffic light or health star rating). Training and tools to calculate, format and print the nutrition information and/or FoPL on packaged food labels may be required. Nutrient declaration is a way to provide nutrient information in a standardised way to enable consumers to compare and choose healthy foods; it also serves to encourage food companies to produce safe, healthy and quality foods to benefit public health.

At national levels, interviews reflected perceptions that food labelling is linked to nutrition awareness and thus might have limited impact in some settings; however, interviewees also acknowledged that consumer awareness of healthy diets is likely to increase. Moreover, for SMEs interested in exporting their products to regional or international markets, food labelling is a major concern. This area is particularly complex for SMEs due to the variety of FoPL schemes led and supported by governments in more than 30 countries, from Scandinavia's keyhole system, to mandatory warning labels like Chile's system of black warning labels shaped like stop signs for foods and drinks that exceed limits for salt, sugar, saturated fat and calories.



## WHAT TO DO

To improve food labelling, SBN Global Members can help SMEs by:

- Supporting food analysis through training and/or access to their laboratory capacity. This will enable SMEs to provide relevant labelling information to consumers.
- Delivering trainings on how to apply the FoPL scheme and highlight relevant food content according to consumer trends.
- Sharing materials and delivering trainings on compliance with international market standards specific to a given country or type of food product.

### Existing business practices for food labelling

While the cost of re-labelling varies from country to country, data on the cost impact of labelling changes exist for Australia and can be illustrative:

- the estimated cost of one-off label changes was around 1.1% of product costs for small changes (e.g. addition of country-of-origin labelling).
- for FoPL changes, such as Australia's Health Star rating scheme, it was estimated that the cost to industry for a medium-complexity change in labelling (e.g. changes in text and label layout) was AUD 5,624 per product. Sensitivity analyses showed that the cost would vary from AUD 2,390 per product for minor changes to labelling text to AUD 7,775 per product for major changes to label designs, production and package redesign.

For more information about the SBN B2B technical assistance platform please consult our [webpage](#)

If you have any question regarding this document or the SBN B2B technical assistance platform, please email [laubert@gainhealth.org](mailto:laubert@gainhealth.org)

