NUTRITION ADVOCACY IN PUBLIC INTEREST-India (NAP*i*)

CONVENER
Dr. Arun Gupta
Child Health & Nutrition Advocate
Mobile: 9899676306

MEMBERS
Prof. HPS Sachdev
Senior Pediatrician & Epidemiologist

Dr. Vandana Prasad
Community Pediatrician

Prof. KP Kushwaha
Pediatrician &Former Principal, BRD Medical College Gorakhpur

Dr Prasanta Tripathy
Co Founder Ekjut

Prof. Umesh Kapil
Professor, Dept of Epidemiology, Biostatistics And Clinical Research, I LBS

Dr. J.P. Dadhich
Child Health & Nutrition Advocate

Ms. Nupur Bidla
Social Worker

Ms. Yashika
Nutritionist

ADDRESS
NAP*i*
BP-33, PITAMPURA,
DELHI-110034
CONTACT NO- 42683059

napiindia.in@gmail.com
www.napiindia.in

August 30, 2022

Mr. Arun Singhal, IAS
Chief Executive Officer
Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
Government of India,
New Delhi.

Sub: Sharing findings of a published study from India and news from Argentina

Dear Mr. Singhal,

I hope you are aware of the new peer reviewed study published – "Front-of-Package Labels on Unhealthy Packaged Foods in India: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment". The study was conducted under the leadership of Dr. S.K. Singh, Professor and Head, Department of Survey Research and Data Analytics, International Institute for Population Sciences, an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

The objective was to test whether FOPLs helped Indian consumers identify "high-in" packaged foods and reduce intentions to purchase them.

The study brings up the following findings :-

This study was conducted as an in-person randomized experiment (n = 2869 adults between ages 18 and 60 years old)in six states of India in 2022. Participants were randomized to one of five FOPLs: a control label (barcode), warning label (octagon with "High in [nutrient]"), Health Star Rating (HSR), Guideline Daily Amount (GDA), or traffic light label. Participants then viewed a series of packaged foods high in sugar, saturated fat, or sodium with the assigned FOPL, and rated product perceptions and label reactions.

- Only 39.1% participants in the control group correctly identified all products high in nutrient(s) of concern.

- All FOPLs led to an increase in this outcome, **with the biggest differences observed for the warning label (60.8%, p < 0.001),** followed by the traffic light label (54.8%,p< 0.001), GDA (55.0%, p < 0.001), and HSR (45.0%, p < 0.01).

- No FOPLs led to a reduction in intentions to purchase the packaged foods.

The authors concluded that warning labels are the most effective FOPL to help Indian consumers identify unhealthy foods.

Further, I am happy to share that Argentina has taken a decision to adopt warning labels on unhealthy food products, showing their confidence in warning labels to protect human health. (https://bit.ly/3AYMzZK)

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We hope FSSAI could review the decision already taken in favour of HSR to be included in the draft regulations based on this concrete evidence; and consider the option of warning labels on unhealthy food products.

We look forward to hearing from you, and request for an appointment to discuss this issue.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

Dr. Arun Gupta on behalf of the NAPi Team

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