

Submission for FAO/WHO e-forum on the implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, physical Activity and Health: Role of Codex Alimentarius Committees

Question 1: Does the Codex Alimentarius Commission have a role in the implementation of the Global Strategy?

1. Fiji considers that the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) has an important role in the implementation of the Global Strategy for Diet, Physical Activity and Health (DPAS) as one of its objectives is to protect the health of consumers. Health data show there is an increasing burden of food and diet related diseases in Fiji, which are leading to premature death and ill-health. The health burden relates to an increasing reliance on imported processed foods and therefore there is an interest in contributing to facilitating fair food trade in a manner consistent with protecting the health of consumers.

(i) Food composition standards are pertinent because in addition to protect consumers from fraud and deception there is also a need to promote health benefits.

(ii) The provision of nutrition and health information about foods is important but care should be taken to take account of the cultural perceptions and varying levels of understanding by consumers worldwide.

Question 2: Are the following issues pertinent to Codex committees activities related to the implementation of the Global Strategy?

a. Scientific Advice about the nature of the evidence needed to support the use of health claims

b. Scientific advice concerning consumer use and understanding of labeling and/or labeling approaches and formats

c. Are there other areas where scientific advice would be pertinent?

a) It is important that scientific advice about the nature of evidence needed to support the use of health claims is obtained from reliable independent sources using criteria similar to those used for the scientific advice provided by expert bodies and consultations to Codex committees and member countries

b) Food labeling should be based on sound scientific evidence and enhance the ability of consumers to make informed choices. It should focus on the critical health needs of the population and at the same time be readily understood by consumers.

c) Risk assessments have already been undertaken as part of the analysis of the burden of disease in different parts of the world including the Pacific. These could be used to guide the work in relation to the Global Strategy.

3. Given the importance of Nutrition issues in general to the Global strategy and the cross cutting nature of nutrition as a topic that cuts across the codex system, what process could be used to manage and coordinate nutrition issues throughout the codex system?

In relation to the Global Strategy more emphasis should be given to the nutritional quality of all foods and in particular those foods making a major contribution to the burden of disease identified by the Global Strategy. Dietary and other relevant recommendations by the Global Strategy should be considered by relevant committees such as CCNFSDU and CCFL.