

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Industry lauds success of self-regulated nutrition labelling plan

By RJ Whitehead, 06-Sep-2016

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The Southeast Asian food industry's efforts to transform food labelling have been lauded by a report that analyses a growing movement to post guideline daily nutrition amounts.

Members of Food Industry Asia, the Singapore-based industry representative body, were found to have doubled their implementation of front-of-pack guideline daily amounts (GDA) since they making a collective commitment to do so.

The initiative was designed to tackle the growing incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases in Southeast Asia.

According to the FIA's report, significant progress has been made in driving the availability and awareness of GDA nutrition labelling. Of the 13 FIA members surveyed across 19 Asian markets, the study found that 85% had rolled out GDA labelling.

"The fact that we've seen such significant growth since our last survey in 2012, across more markets and more SKUs, is extremely encouraging and shows the food industry's commitment to having a seat at the table and being part of the solution to tackle Asia's growing obesity problem," said Matt Kovac, executive director of FIA.

The report shows that 11 out of 13 FIA participants have adopted GDA labelling for all or partial lines in selected markets in Asia. Of the 11, five have implemented the practice in all Asian markets where they operate, while six others have plans to expand GDA adoption in more Asian markets this year.

Adoption is most prevalent in Singapore, with 11 out of 13 FIA members using GDA labels for all or some product lines, while the next highest adoption rate has taken place in Malaysia, where 10 members have rolled out GDA labels.

The Philippines has seen the most progress since 2012—nine FIA members now have GDA labels for all or some SKUs, compared to three members previously.

GDA labelling has become more prevalent across markets in Southeast Asia, with three new markets adopting the labelling since 2012—namely Laos, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The labelling has seen highest penetration among confectionary products, together with non-alcoholic carbonated drinks, dairy products and ice cream, according to the report.

FIA members, which are also members of the International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA), have made global commitments to roll out GDA labelling in all markets they operate in by the end of 2016.

Kovac said that it was encouraging to see, from the report, that two non-IFBA members have adopted GDA labelling in all or selected markets in Asia, as part of their commitments to supporting appropriate eating choices by providing better consumer education on their products' nutrition values.

"The GDA labelling system highlights the amount and percentage contribution of an average person's daily intake, giving him or her a better understanding of how products should be consumed within a balanced diet and lifestyle. Science-based guidelines, such as the GDA scheme, give consumers an understanding of how a single food product contributes to a balanced diet, allowing them to make more informed choices," said Kovac.

FIA now plans to implement a consumer-centric study to canvass insights towards consumer behaviour and understanding of nutrition labelling. It also expects to develop and launch an online nutrition knowledge centre that includes GDA labelling facts.

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