How can IOM assist current efforts on front of pack labeling?

Jessica Leighton, PhD, MPH
Senior Advisor for Science
Office of the Commissioner
Office of Foods
FDA

Introduction

- Chronic diseases are the largest causes of mortality in the U.S.
- Overweight and obesity, affecting 2/3 of U.S. adults, increase the risk of chronic disease
- Obesity/chronic disease both linked to diet
- Reducing obesity/chronic disease requires multi-pronged approach
- Labeling of food products is one tool to assist consumers in making healthy dietary choices consistent with federal nutrition guidelines
- Nutrition Facts Panel provides information that is trusted and fairly widely used but
  - Not everyone uses it or understands it
  - It is not convenient for hurried shoppers

Purpose of Front of Pack (FOP)

- Provide consumers with easily accessible nutritional information
- To encourage product reformulation

Criteria for FOP

- The FOP should provide a tool for consumers that:
  - Is easily understood
  - Is consistent in format
  - Is consistent with dietary guidelines
  - Can be used for quick information
  - Is based on evidence

FDA Questions

1. Consider the purpose and overall merits of FOP nutrition icons

- Provide articulation of communication goals of FOP to address needs of diverse populations.
- Provide input on relative importance of nutrients that should be considered for FOP related to chronic disease and obesity
  - Calories and Serving Size
  - Saturated Fat
  - Sugars (total vs added)
  - Total Fat
  - *trans* fat
  - Sodium

1. Consider the purpose and overall merits of FOP nutrition icons

- Identify target audience for FOP symbols
- Provide input on formats that can reach populations not currently using Nutrition Facts Panel

2. Consider advantages/disadvantages of various FOP approaches

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different systems in communicating to diverse populations (age, education, culture, gender)

- Provide assessments (strengths and weaknesses) of the various FOP systems* for communicating on obesity and chronic disease

*Review and include both
  - Summary symbols (e.g. NuVal and Hannaford)
  - Nutrient symbols (e.g., calories/serving size, sodium, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, added sugars)

3. Identify criteria underlying FOP systems, evaluate their scientific basis

- Review and comment on FDA proposals for:
  - Draft high/medium/low criteria for FOP nutrients
  - Draft guidance for FOP calorie/serving size information
  - Use of an added sugars versus total sugars on FOP
  - Inclusion of only nutrients to limit on FOP (i.e., total fat, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars)
  - Recommend, as appropriate, other factors FDA should include, and the scientific basis for recommendation

3. Identify criteria underlying FOP systems and evaluate their scientific basis

- Review algorithms that power existing FOP summary symbols
- Develop criteria for algorithm to power a government-sponsored symbol providing information on nutrients related to chronic disease and obesity
- Review and comment on algorithms to power a symbol related to chronic disease and obesity
- Provide recommendations for which products should have FOP labeling

4. Provide guidance on which systems are most effective in promoting health

- Most effective symbols
- Need to balance need for sufficient information for decision making versus consumer confusion from too much information
- Percent of products that need FOP labels to ensure well recognized system
- Design issues (size, shape, color, clutter issues)
- Formats that can reach populations not currently using Nutrition Facts Panel

5. Provide input on criteria for evaluating the implementation of FOP system

Criteria should include evaluation of:

- Market penetration
- Use by consumers to make healthful dietary choices consistent with dietary guidelines
- Influence on behavior change
- Impact on reformulation

Identify further research questions

Questions?