

2021 ASEAN LEADERS' DECLARATION ON THE REFORMULATION AND PRODUCTION OF HEALTHIER FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPTIONS

Issued on 26 October 2021

The Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), on the occasion of the 38th ASEAN Summit held on 26 October 2021;

NOTE WITH CONCERN THAT:

1. The nutritional patterns among ASEAN Member States have shifted because of the increase in economic development and urbanization which has led to increased food and beverage production, resulting in changes to dietary consumption;
2. The shift in dietary patterns in ASEAN Member States have given way to varied diets containing more animal proteins including salted fishes, processed and packaged foods containing substantial amounts of added sodium, sugars, and fat as well as less vegetables and fruits consumption;
3. This nutritional transition resulting in unhealthy dietary patterns have increased the risk for the development of non-communicable diseases and obesity. It has significant consequences for regional food and nutrition policies and population health.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 has committed towards sustainable economic development through development of new and appropriate technologies, best practices and management systems to ensure food safety and address health/disease and environmental issues, particularly in the fast growing aquaculture, livestock and horticulture sub-sectors. Simultaneously, AEC Blueprint 2025 is also determined to enhance sectoral cooperation to create further harmonisation of standards and conformance in healthcare products and services, such as common technical documents required for registration processes and nutrition labelling and continue to develop and issue new healthcare product directives to further facilitate trade in healthcare products in the region;
2. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint pledged to lift the quality of life of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented, people-centred, environment friendly, and geared towards the promotion of sustainable development. The ASCC Blueprint 2025 opens a world of opportunities to collectively deliver and fully realise human development, resiliency and sustainable development as we face new and emerging challenges together;
3. With the current unhealthy dietary consumption among ASEAN Member States, the reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages was deemed necessary, based on situational analysis conducted among ASEAN Member States. According to this analysis, several ASEAN Member States, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand have made some efforts for food labelling, reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages as well as implementation of fiscal measures to promote healthy and balanced diets, either fully or partially;

4. The Multi-sectoral National Action Plan for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) in ASEAN Member States has adopted strategies that are evidence-based and cost-effective that can provide a strong basis for appropriate policies, legislations and regulations concerning the promotion of healthy and balanced diets;

RECOGNIZE THAT:

1. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) health targets (2016-2030), the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2013-2030), 'Best Buys' and Other Recommended Interventions for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2017) are the overall guiding documents;
2. The ASEAN Post 2015 Health Development Agenda has included prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and promotion of good nutrition and healthy diet, as its priorities toward the creation of a community that is healthy, caring, sustainable and productive, and one that practices healthy lifestyle, resilient to health threats and has universal access to healthcare;
3. The ASEAN Member States have prioritized reformulation and production of healthier food and beverage options as a key strategy to be implemented by conducting inter-pillar consultation to achieve maximal health potential of ASEAN Community through promotion of healthy lifestyle, ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, specifically consumption of healthy and balanced diet;
4. The ASEAN Member States have also included the sharing of good practices on innovative health financing and use of taxes to fund the promotion of healthy lifestyle, including non-communicable disease programmes in respective countries;
5. The ASEAN Member States have agreed to develop a framework on fiscal measures for unhealthy food and beverages, including but not limited to sweet beverages, salt and fat, as one of the key strategic measures in preventing and controlling non-communicable diseases;
6. The Interpillar Consultation Meeting on the Reformulation and Production of Healthy Food and Beverage Options on 1-2 July 2019 in Semarang, Indonesia, resulted to the drafting of Situation Analysis and the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Reformulation and Production of Healthier Food and Beverage Options;
7. The Fifty Third ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Meeting conducted from 8-15 September 2021 has endorsed on 107 tariff lines of food items to be included in the list of essential goods as part of annex of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of the Implementation of the Non-Tariff Measures on Essential Goods under the Hanoi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to The Covid-19 Pandemic (MoU of NTMs).

CALL upon ASEAN Member States in collaboration with stakeholders to take action on:

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION:

1. To ensure continuous efforts towards the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in ASEAN Member States by enhancing regional capacity through integrated approaches to promote reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages in the region;

2. To formulate a multi-sectoral regional action plan aimed at promoting reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages to provide considerations to country policies, interventions and implementation, and promote regional cooperation across ASEAN Community Pillars, ASEAN Member States and food and beverage industries. Any measure regarding reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages be in line with country situations and policies, including existing global and regional mechanism and agreements, among others but not limited to WTO Agreement on Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Agreement to Technical Barriers to Trade.
3. To monitor and evaluate the progress of the multi-sectoral regional action plan aimed at promoting the reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages, including the effectiveness of the policies;
4. To develop and implement regional and national campaigns on choosing healthier food and beverages along with promotion of healthy lifestyle for behaviour change;
5. To share information, lessons-learned and best practices in improving ASEAN people access to healthier food and beverages through initiatives, such as seminars, trainings and exchange visits among the ASEAN Member States;

IMPLEMENT BEST-BUY STRATEGIES

1. To develop ASEAN minimum standards and guidance on designing and implementing Front-of-Pack (FoP) label system to provide better information to consumers on healthier food and beverages based on international guideline, such as the WHO Guiding principles and framework manual for front-of-pack labelling for promoting healthy diet (2019) and possible global document among other on-going related Codex Alimentarius guidelines;
2. Using FoP label system to gradually encourage reformulation and production of healthier food and beverage options, among others by setting limits for sodium, sugars and fat as well as increasing appropriated nutrients in food and beverages with consideration to consumption patterns of each ASEAN Member States;
3. To consider mutual recognition or harmonisation of FoP labelling on reformulated healthier food and beverage products that are being exported to or imported into ASEAN Member States, in line with countries' legislation or policy;
4. To consider and plan for taking fiscal measures to promote reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages, such as sweet beverage taxation and non-tax incentive for incrementally reduced sodium, sugars and fat in food and beverage products.

PROMOTE INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

1. To increase the awareness and understanding of socio-cultural and economic pillars, environmental and political elements of their roles and responsibilities in Non-Communicable Diseases prevention and control;
2. To develop and promote the implementation of fiscal measures on unhealthy food and beverages, such as sweet beverage taxation and non-tax incentive for incrementally reduced sodium, sugars and fat in food and beverage products by engaging the industry, including the ASEAN Food and Beverages Alliance, and national NCD Alliances or similar organisations in ASEAN Member States;

3. To engage and build capacity among public, and private sectors and civil society in efforts to undertake multisectoral interventions in response to diet-related health problems and prevent and control non-communicable diseases through healthy lifestyle;
4. To call for the ASEAN Health Ministers, ASEAN Finance Ministers and ASEAN Economic Ministers to work on the implementation of this ASEAN Leaders' Declaration.

ADOPTED on this Twenty Sixth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand Twenty One, in a single original copy in the English language.