IDF Principles on Environmental Labelling

In this document the following definitions are used:

The **"environment"** is the totality of all the external conditions affecting the life, development, and survival of an organism. - OECD

"Labelling" includes any written, printed, or graphic matter that is present on the label, accompanies the food, or is displayed near the food, including that for the purpose of promoting its sale or disposal. – CXS 1-1955

"Claim" means any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular qualities relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature, processing, composi-tion or any other quality - CXS 1-1955

A **"nutritional LCA (nLCA)"** study is defined as an LCA study where the provision of nutrient(s) is considered as either the main function or one of the main functions of a food item – FAO (2021)[1]

These principles are intended to identify considerations and contextual elements relevant to environmental labelling of food[2]. We would like to note that a low carbon product is not the same as a low carbon diet and is not the same as sustainable diet or dietary pattern. These principles do not advocate for or against adoption of such labeling schemes. However, if such labelling schemes are adopted, harmonization of principles based on international consensus is necessary.

Environmental Labelling on foods must:

I. Be truthful, accurate, impartial, and not misleading.

- This can be accomplished by ensuring that supporting information is readily available and transparent, while respecting confidential business information and intellectual property rights

II. Be implemented on a voluntary basis and not create barriers to international trade

III. Provide meaningful information about the environmental impact of the product, considering both positive and negative externalities, that are specific/relevant to the product

- Consider local or regional contexts with regards to the environmental impact
- Consider the nutritional value of the food[3]
- Consider country or region-specific Dietary Guidelines and/or science-based nutrition policies to ensure environmental labels do not ignore the nutrition and health benefits of consuming certain foods and/or food groups.

IV. Be based on the best available, evidence-based, internationally recognized methodology using fit for purpose and replicable data.

The methodology should include life cycle assessment that consider all stages of producing/ manufacturing the product from cradle to shelf

- Expressing the environmental impact (LCA) of a food on a mass or volume basis is not recommended because it is not coherent with the primary function of the food, which is to provide nutritional value[4]
- Prioritize ongoing research to enable future use of nLCA methodology as appropriate
- If comparisons are provided, they should be made in a consistent manner with comparable and transparent methodologies and best available data

V. Be supported by education programs, to enable consumers to choose healthy balanced sustainable diets/ dietary pattern and effectively interpret the environmental labels.

VI. Be regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure methodologies and data stay current, reflect changing scientific evidence.

VII. Allow for improvement, innovation, and progress overtime

VIII. Be aligned with the ONE HEALTH approach[5]

Endnotes

(1) McLaren, S., Berardy, A., Henderson, A., Holden, N., Huppertz, T., Jolliet, O., De Camillis, C., Renouf, M., Rugani, B., Saarinen, M., van der Pols, J., Vázquez-Rowe, I., Antón Vallejo, A., Bianchi, M., Chaudhary, A., Chen, C., CooremanAlgoed, M., Dong, H., Grant, T., Green, A., Hallström, E., Hoang, H., Leip, A., Lynch, J., McAuliffe, G., Ridoutt, B., Saget, S., Scherer, L., Tu-omisto, H., Tyedmers, P. & van Zanten, H. 2021. Integration of environment and nutrition in life cycle assessment of food items: opportunities and challenges. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8054en

(2) These principles may also have relevancy for environmental claims and exclude nutritional value on front of pack

(3) Relevant methodologies to be considered such as nLCA

(4) with due regards to food based dietary guidelines and science-based nutrition policies

(5) One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and op-timize the health of people, animals and ecosystems." (One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) (who.int))