

Regulatory Status of Nutrition and Health Claims in Southeast Asia

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This presentation reviews the nutrition and health claim status in eight SEA countries (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam). Some forms of nutrition claims (nutrient content and comparative claims) are permitted in all the countries reviewed but they do not all follow the criteria as given in the Codex guide. The types of health claims (nutrient function, other function and disease risk reduction claim) permitted varies significantly amongst countries in the region. Most SEA countries allow nutrient function claims for several vitamins and minerals, while Brunei and Lao PDR are still developing these. Other function claims are permitted only in several countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore. These claims relate to several bioactive (functional) components in improving or modifying a physiological function or promoting health. Thailand approves the use only of probiotics claim. Disease risk reduction claims are considered higher level claims and are permitted only in a three countries, namely Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore and only for a few nutrients or bioactive compounds. For those countries that permit health claims, regulatory authorities require proper scientific substantiation of these claims. The significant differences in the nutrition and health claims permitted in the countries in the region have brought about difficulties for companies to use common packages for foods distributed across the region and results in significant negative economic implications. Opportunities exist for discussions and networking among countries in the region, eg through a series of workshops organized by the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) SEA Region since 2001.