2022 | Southeast Asia Public Health Nutrition Network

# Webinar Report

Series 2/2022 Promotion and Consumers' Use of Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) in Southeast Asia Countries 22 November 2022 | Zoom Online Platform



Partner Societies/Associations:









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#### **Summary**

A webinar on Promotion and Consumers' Use of Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) in Southeast Asia Countries was organised by the Southeast Asia Public Health Nutrition (SEA-PHN) Network\* on 22 November 2022 via Zoom online platform. The webinar provided a platform to exchange experiences in approaches for FBDGs promotion and dissemination among SEA countries, to discuss the lesson learned, challenges and effective ways for the promotion of FBDGs messages to the public. The available data on consumers' awareness, understanding and use of FBDGs in SEA countries was also discussed and the Network shared findings of an online survey on Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in SEA countries.

#### \*About SEA-PHN Network

Established on June 2014, the Network aims for a more effective implementation of public health nutrition measures to improve nutritional wellbeing of populations in the region. The current 5 members of the network, which are affiliated with the Federation of Asian Nutrition Societies (FANS) and the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) are Food and Nutrition Society of Indonesia (Pergizi Pangan), Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. (NFP), Nutrition Association of Thailand (NAT) and Vietnam Nutrition Association (VINUTAS). More details of the Network are available on the Network website: <a href="http://sea-phn.org">http://sea-phn.org</a>.

#### **1. Introduction**

Food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs) provide science-based, simple messages on healthy eating for the population for the purpose of promoting health and preventing nutrition-related deficiencies and excesses. FBDGs may also include advice on other food and health related issues, such as food safety, physical activity, and healthy lifestyle. As FBDGs are intended to be used by the general public to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles, messages of FBDGs must be disseminated and communicated effectively to the public through various channels to ensure a good level of public awareness.

This will serve as a crucial step in getting people to follow the recommendations of the FBDGs messages. In this regard, understanding consumers' knowledge and use of these messages is equally important to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the messages and provide insights for FBDGs messages improvement in the future.

With the objectives of enabling nutritionists in the region to share their experiences in approaches for FBDGs promotion and dissemination, and discuss effective ways for the promotion of FBDGs messages to the public, as well as to explore the available data in SEA on consumers' awareness, understanding and use of FBDGs in SEA countries, the webinar on Promotion and Consumers' Use of FBDGs in SEA Countries was organised by the Network

The webinar was attended by 263 participants including nutritionists, dietitians, members of academia, researchers, policy makers, public health workers, nutrition graduates and postgraduate students as well as other healthcare professionals. This report summarises the presentations and discussions during the webinar.

#### 2. Welcome Remarks

#### Welcome Remarks

#### Dr Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network and President of Nutrition Society of Malaysia

Dr Tee E Siong, chairman of SEA-PHN Network gave the opening address. He shared with the participants the Network's background and it's key activities in promoting public health nutrition in the region such as Good Nutrition – Key to Healthy Children (GNKHC) school nutrition promotion programme, publication of monograph and review papers on FBDGs and national plan of action for nutrition (NPANs) of the SEA countries, conduct of nutrition leadership programme workshop and webinar series.

He then introduced the sessions of the webinar. Noting that there was limited data on consumers' understanding and use of FBDGs in the region, Dr Tee shared that the three member socities of the Network (NSM, NFP and NAT) have jointly conducted an online survey on consumers awareness and understanding of the FBDG messages and that the results would be presented during this webinar to provide some basic understanding on the SEA countries' situation in this area.

## 3. Session 1 - Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Experience in SEA countries

Chairperson: Dr Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network and President of Nutrition Society of Malaysia

#### **Presentation 1:**

Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Experience in Malaysia

#### Speaker: Ms Khairul Zarina Binti Mohd Yusof, Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia

Ms Khairul Zarina shared the background of FBDG development in Malaysia and the nation's experiences in disseminating and promoting the FBDG messages to the public. The Malaysian Dietary Guidelines (MDG) was first published in 1999 and was recently reviewed in 2020 to be in line with the nation's latest recommended nutrient intakes (RNI) 2017. Other dietary guidelines for specific target groups that are currently being reviewed or developed include dietary guidelines for children and adolescents, dietary guidelines for elderly, and dietary guidelines for vegetarians.

In terms of approaches used in promoting and disseminating FBDG messages in Malaysia, various methods and platforms have been employed, including:

- Use of mass media and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram
- Community based nutrition education programmes
- Development and dissemination of educational materials for the community such as posters and flyers
- Social protection programmes e.g. Food Basket Programme to provide food assistant to undernourished children below 7 years old living in poor households in the country
- Community Feeding Programme and formulation of specific intervention particularly for indigenous children living at the interior region.
- Dissemination of FBDG messages through inter-ministries collaborations:
  - Integration of dietary guidelines messages in school curriculum, comprising topics such as healthy eating and Malaysian Food Pyramid across the curriculum in primary and secondary schools
  - Implementation of School Meal Programme
  - Integration of nutrition component into agricultural such as home/school gardening programmes

The promotion and dissemination of the FBDG messages in Malaysia were not without challenges, some of the challenges faced were:

 Lack of supportive environment for healthy eating due to several factors such as food availability, accessibility and affordability, mushrooming of fast food restaurants and services, abundant supplies of ultra-processed foods in the market as well as uncontrolled marketing of unhealthy food and beverage advertisements

- Incoherent policies along the food supply chain and lack of ownership and commitment by other ministries/agencies in promoting the MDG messages
- Conflicting interests such as food and ariculture policies oriented to market economy, industry lobbing, mass media and marketing
- People's attitude and cultures such as traditional beliefs and lack of interest

Ms Khairul Zarina concluded her presentation by emphasising that FBGDs are important tools for nutrition policies and public health as they provide evidence based guidelines on healthy food consumption, and that strong commitment from various stakeholders are needed in advocating and implementing the MDG to all levels of the population.

#### Presentation 2:

#### Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Experience in Philippines

#### Speaker: Dr Imelda Angeles-Agdeppa, Food and Nutrition Resarch Institute, Philippines

Dr Angeles-Agdeppa started her presentation by sharing the background of Department of Science and Techology-Food and Nutrition Resarch Institute (DOST-FNRI) and its roles in developing tools and standards for nutrition and food guidance in Philippines such as Philippine Dietary Reference Intake (PDRI) 2015, food pyramid, Pinggang Pinoy, the Philippine Food Composition Table 2019 and the Food Exchange Lists for Meal Planning. The Nutritional Guidelines for Filipinos (NGF) has decades of history and the lastet version was published in 2012, followed by the launch of the plate-based food guide Pinggang Pinoy to supplement the NGF.

Multi government agencies approach was one of the main channels used for NGF promotion and dissemination in which the National Nutrition Council Governing Board Resolution has specified the roles of various government agencies for NGF promotion. Several other platforms utilised to promote the NGF messages to the public include:

- Promotion through multimedia such as Facebook, radio
- Out-of-home promotional methods such as e-billboards, e-bus and light rail transit station
- Initiatives to develop NGF communication strategy such as consultation workshops to identify target audience, message handle and branding, and qualitative research on the coomunication strategy
- Development of communication materials and collaterals such as flyer, refrigerator magnet, standee and YouTube videos as well as related television and radio programmes
  - Television programmes
    - Nutrition TV programmes for children in partnership with the foundation of a major channel for free airtime, airing of TV plugs, segment buys, guesting in TV popular programs and featured as resource person on nutrition issues.
  - Radio programmes, e.g.

- One Nutrition, One Nation recorded one-hour weekly programme aired in Community Radio Network stations and on YouTube
- Nutrition School-on-the-Air (NSOA) which encourage the adoption of the dietary guideline messages and correct misconception on nutrition
- Global promotion of NGF among Filipinos through posting of messages on websites of Department of Foreign Affairs and Philippine embassies and consulates in overseas.
- Encourages support of all government agencies and local government units through Memo Circular
- Integration of nutrition education learning modules in school curriculum
- Public-private collaboration

Sharing the Filipino Healthy Eating Index of adults aged 19-59 years old in Philippines, Dr Angeles-Agdeppa highlighted that large proportion of household meal planners in the Philippines were not aware of the NGF and that the overall diet of Filipino adults did not conform to the 2012 NGF. She emphasised the importance to develop a comprehensive plan that includes implementation, assessment, monitoring and reformulation. The need for a feedback system approach, to involve significant sectors of food economics and maintain dialogue with the food industries to inform, educate and gather feedback were also being highlighted.

As a conclusion, Dr Angeles-Agdeppa highlighted FBDG should be reviewed and revised periodically and that moving forward, future NGF messages should contain quantitative information in order to better evaluate the adherence of individuals to the guidelines. Besides, shift from iterative process to use of diet modelling is vital and that clear implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans for FBDG should be included.

#### **Presentation 3:**

#### Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Experience in Thailand

#### Speaker: Dr Wannachanok Boonchoo, Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University

Dr Wannachanok shared the FBDG development milestones in Thailand and updated that the revised FBDGs for pregnant women, lactating women, children aged 6 – 23 months and elderly have been completed and that the new version of FBDGs with both qualitative and quantitative recommendations would be launchched in 2023. It was also shared that the revision of FBDGs for school-age children and adolescents, working -age adults, and young childrens from 2-5 years old are still ongoing.

In terms of promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages, Thailand has taken several approaches and efforts for different target groups:

• Development and use of food pyramid as pictorial guide to supplement the FBDG messages

- Community based activities conducted by trained health professionals, health volunteers and nutritionists.
- At national level, the FBDG messages were promoted via mass mass media channels including TV, radio and social media platforms
- Integrating food based recommendations into Maternal and Child Health Handbook
- Integrating FBDG messages into primary school curriculum and make available the distance learning television for remote schools to educate students on the FBDG.
- Among the formats and channels used for FBDG messages promotion includes booklets, leaflets, posters and educational materials such as song, food models and interactive worksheets.

Dr Wannachanok highlighted that while various chanels of promotion have been used, one of Thailand's challenges in FBDG promotion was the weak communication plan, and there were also lack of evaluations of communication effectiveness as well as lack of continuous monitoring of dietary intake using comparable methods. Moving forward, it was emphasised that effective ways to promote FBDGs would be through advocacy for multi-stakeholders collaboration, employment of effective communication strategies and further strengthen nutrition education in school settings.

#### **Presentation 4:**

#### Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Experience in Vietnam

#### Speaker: Dr Ngo Thi Ha Phuong, National Institute of Nutrition, Vietnam

Dr Ngo Thi Ha Phuong shared an update of the current status of FBDG in Vietnam that the latest revision for the FBDG has been completed in 2022 and is currently in the process of being endorded by the Ministry of Health. In addition, three-dimensional food/nutrition pyramids have been used as pictorial guides to deliver the messages of the FBDG to the public. In 2015, four nutrition pyramids for four different age groups (3-5 years old, 6-11, years old, adult, pregnancy and lactating women) were published to disseminate the messages of the guidelines. Another two nutrition pyramids respectively for population aged 12-14 years old and 15-19 years old were developed in year 2017.

National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) is the leading body in the promotion and dissemination of FBDG in Vietnam. In this regard, the strategies, approaches and channels taken include:

- Multistakeholders i.e. ministries, agencies, NGOs, scientists and educators involvement in the FBDG development, promotion and dissemination
- Development of materials in the form of manual, graphic representations, leaftlet, nutritional pyramids to guide the usage of FBDG
- Development of nutrition core messages based on FBDG.
- Implementation of FBDG workshops for press collaborators
- Implementation of FBDG usage workshops for 63 Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) in the country, in which the health staffs of the CDC Network act as primary person in disseminating the messages.

- Distribution of electronic and printed materials
- Integration of FBDG messgaes into health sectors and stakeholders health communication campaiagns.
- Mass media propagation about FBDG
- Dissemination of messages through the NIN official website

Dr Phuong also highlighted some of the challenges in developing and promoting FBDGs to the public:

- Challenges in the FBDG development:
  - Lack of some evidence-based food consumption data in Vietnam, e.g. gap in the food consumption data by food groups and age groups, lack of research on applying the healthy eating index to the Vietnamese diet assessment, as well as gap in the research on the food behaviours of Vietnamese and the lack of recommendations on some food consumption e.g. red meat consumptions etc
- Challenges in FBDG promotion:
  - Lack of resources including budget and human resources to implement the communication activities
  - Health staffs have not been adequately trained and weak in communication skills
  - Week coordinations in communication between nutrition and related sectors as well as in the nutritional network

Sharing her views on effective ways forward for the promotion of FBDG to the public, she emphasised that the guidelines implementation should be closely connected with the activities of the NPAN and should have involvement from multi-sectoral organizations. She also highlighted the necessity of training, monitoring and evaluation for implementation of the FBDGs in order to ensure the success of guiding consumers to convert advices into action.

She summarised that the socioeconomic situation in Vietnam is changing over short periods and therefore FBDG would be necessary in guiding the developing of the national nutrition strategy for 2021-2030. The future direction for Vietnam should include developing FBDG based on the current intake and thus the need for research on applying healthy eating index to the Vietnamese diet assessment. Besides, multi-stakeholders involvement in FBDG development should be emphasised, and the promotion of FBDG should combine mass media and face-to-face consultants and be integrated into other health communication.

## 4. Session 2 – Consumer awareness, understanding and use of FBDGs in SEA countries

Chairperson: Ms Goh Peen Ern, Manager Nutrition Communications Asia-Pacific, BENEO-Institute

#### Presentation:

Findings of an online survey on Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in SEA Countries.

#### Speakers: Dr Roseline Yap Wai Kuan, Nutrition Society of Malaysia; Mrs Maria Lourdes Vega, Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines

On behalf of the member societies of the SEA-PHN Network, Dr Roselin Yap and Mrs Maria Lourdes Vega presented the findings of an online survey jointly conducted by three member socities of the Network, i.e. NSM, NFP and NAT.

The fundamental purpose of the online survey was to understand the awareness level and usage of the key messages by the public. It was emphasised that a good level of public awareness is crucial in getting people to implement the FBDG messages, and understanding consumers usage will help to identify any necessary changes to be made to the FBDG or their implementation.

As a brief, the survey was conducted online through Google Form from 17 October up to 7 November 2022 in Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. The target respondents for the survey were adults aged 18 yeard and above living in the three countries. A common questionnaire covering short and simple questions on identifying FBDG messages of respective country (awareness), usage of FBDGs messages and pictorial food guides, and common sources of healthy eating information was developed and reviewed by the three nutrition bodies in SEA country. The questionnaire was then translated into respective language to be used in the three countries.

The respondents from the three countries (Malaysia n= 218, Philippines n=1101, Thailand n= 105) shared common sociodemographic characteristic in which majority of the respondents were female, young adults aged 18-39 years old, have tertiary education level and were single.

The main findings on awareness, understanding and use of the country's dietary guidelines presented were summarised as below:

- A. Awareness of FBDG messages
  - The most recognised dietary guidelines messages in the three countries were: Malaysia
    - Drink plenty of water daily
    - Limit sugar intake in foods and beverages

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits everyday
- Be physically active everyday

#### Philippines

- Eat more vegetables & fruits to get the essential vitamins, minerals & fibre for regulation of body processes
- Be physically active, make healthy food choices, manage stress, avoid alcoholic beverage, and do not smoke to help prevent lifestyle-related non-communicable disease
- Consume fish, lean meat, poultry, egg, dried beans or nuts daily for growth and repair of body tissues

#### Thailand

- o Eat a variety of foods from each of the five food groups and maintain a proper weight
- $\circ$  Eat clean and safe foods
- Avoid or reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages
- The least recognised messages by the respondents were:

#### Malaysia

- o Consume adequate amounts of milk and milk products
- Eat adequate amounts of rice, other cereals, whole grain cereal-based products & tubers
- Consume safe and clean foods and beverages

#### Philippines

- $\circ$   $\;$  Eat a variety of foods everyday to get the nutrients needed by the body  $\;$
- o Use iodized salt to prevent iodine deficiency disorders

#### Thailand

- Eat a diet containing appropriate amounts of fat
- Drink in appropriate quality and quantity for one's age
- Majority (more than 80%) of the respondents were aware of the pictorial food guides e.g. food guide pyramid/healthy plate of the country.
- Generally, higher proportion of the Philippines respondents (73-94%) were aware of the FBDG messages, followed by Malaysia (61-88%) and Thailand (56-97%).
- Overall, the most well known nutrition recommendations for all the three countries were "eat more/plenty of vegetables and fruits" and "be physically active".

- B. Usage of FBDG and pictorial food guides
  - Majority of the respondents in the three countries were aware of the pictorial food guides e.g food pyramid/healthy plate.
  - While being able to identify the key messages of the FBDGs, only 1/3 of the respondents in the three countries responded that they 'always' follow the FBDG recommendations.
  - Reasons for not following dietary guidelines: Majority said that the FBDG messages are too difficult to follow
  - Similarly, the high awareness rate on food pyramid and healthy plate did not translate into actual implementation by the respondents, in which less than 1/3 of them (Malaysia 22.9%, Philippines 20.7% and Thailand 18.3%) 'always' use food pyramid and healthy plate as guide in food purchases/meal preparation.
- C. Consumers' main sources of healthy eating information
  - Similar trend in 3 countries: Internet as main sources of info
  - Low rate of referring to nutritionist/dietitian as main source of healthy eating information

It was recommended that the FBDG messages need to be further simplified in the future. There is also a need for communication of FBDG information to consumers, and that the information should be increasingly communicated via internet. More works need to be done to increase the visibility of nutritionists and dietitians as reliable sources of nutrition information.

#### 5. Session 3 – Panel discussion – Consumer communication on FBDG messages

#### Moderator: Dr Tee E Siong, chairman, SEA-PHN Network

In this session, all speakers and webinar participants further discussed, provided comments and shared thoughts on consumer communication on FBDG messages.

Participants and the panelists shared their views on barriers/challenges in promoting adhenrence to the FBDGs recommendations:

- Soaring food prices and media have influenced in steorotyping healthy foods as expensive
- Mushrooming of food delivering companies in the SEA region, and that these food delivery companies are providing very limited healthy food choices.
- Public in general are aware of the healthy eating concept, however they may find it difficult to follow when it comes to serving size, portion size etc; more data should be collected to further evaluate on this matter
- FBDG messages have not adequately reached the community and understood by the population
- In Vietnam, while the food choices are becoming better for some foods such as fruits and vegetables, the consumptions of sugary drinks and fast foods have been increasing, especially among the adolescents.

• Fast food restaurants, hawker stalls and street foods vendors play a major role in determining the eating habits of the people. However, health professionals and the authorities are not giving much attention to these groups.

The FBDGs monitoring and evaluation system to ensure adherence to the recommendations and the need of structured monitoring system in future were discussed:

- Ms Khairul Zarina shared Malaysia context in which a list of indators have been identified in the NPAN to monitor the prevalences of Malaysian adults meeting the recommendations of healthy eating based on Malaysian Food Pyramid. The specific target for each food group has been set to be achieved by the end of the NPAN (year 2025) and the data would be collected via series of national food and nutrition surveys.
- Malaysia is also having a plan to establish a long term multi-sectoral framework on advocacy of MDG at all level. It is hoped that the framework would give guidance to all nutritionists in the country and other relevant stakeholders in carrying out various MDG advocating activities to the population, and that impact indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the MDG promotion at all levels would be identified to be included in the framework.
- Mr Carl from Philippines stated that the monitoring and evaluation of dietary guidelines in the Philippines were done through the national nutrition survey (NNS) in the country. Another tool used to monitor was the Healthy Eating Index to assess the dietary quality of the public in terms of the compliance to the dietary guidelines. He further shared that the NNS was conducted at the same time when the FBDG was being developed and thus helped to monitor the adherence to FBDG messages at the population level.
- Dr Ngo Thi ha Phuong stated that the drawback in Vietnam was the lack of recent evaluation and that the last monitoring study was conducted back in 2010.
- Dr Pattanee Winichagoon noted that much promotion have been done through infrastructure and reaching out to public and yet the uptake by consumers are uncertain. She suggested that in moving forward, it would be worth reexamining the practicality of the FBDG (e.g. are the messages too broad and not quantitiative) and also considering more evaluation approaches e.g. messages reached, barriers for not practising the FBDGs etc.

Recommendations/Suggestions to improve FBDGs implementation, promotion and consumers' adherence:

- Comparative study to critically analyse the lessons learned and way forward for development and implementation of FBDGs
- Governments should collaborate with restaurants, and encourage corporate social responsibility programmes by these restaurants to provide discounts for consumers who choose healthy foods, or provide incentives for partner restaurants providing healthy food options
- In the efforts to encourage restaurants or fast foods chain to use healthier ingredients for the menu, Ms Kahirul Zarina shared that Malaysia has two initiatives namely MyMeal and and MyChoice. The MyMeal initiative gives recognition to the menu that fulfill the concept of

Malaysian Healthy Plate, whereas MyChoice initiative gives recognition to fast food chain restaurants' menu which met the nutrient criteria set by the Ministry of Health.

 Incentives to the hawker stalls and restaurants for providing healthier options to the public; similar incentives should be given to manufacturers who produce healthier options of prepackaged foods.

#### 6. Pictorial Report



Figure 1. Dr Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network gave the welcome remarks



Figure 2. Ms Khairul Zarina presented on Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) in Malaysia



Figure 3. Dr Imelda Angeles-Agdeppa presented on Promotion and Dissemination of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines: Phillipine Experience



### Promotion and dissemination of FBDG messages: Thailand

Dr. Wannachanok Boonchoo Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University

Figure 4. Dr Wannachanok Boonchoo presented on Promotion and Dissemination of FBDG messages in Thailand



Figure 5. Dr Phuong Ngo thi Ha presented on Promotion and Dissemination of FBDG messages in Vietnam



Figure 6. Dr Roseline Yap Wai Kuan presented on the Findings of an Online Survey on Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in Malaysia and Thailand



Figure 7. Mrs Maria Lourdes Vega presented on the Findings of an Online Survey on Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in Philippines



Figure 8. Panel discussion moderated by Dr Tee E Siong



Figure 9. Group photos of invited speakers, chairpersons, council and associate members of SEA-PHN Network and the Network secretariat

#### 7. Acknowledgements

The Network would like to thank the Chairs of the webinar, all speakers for their presentations and sharing their views during the Q&A and discussion sessions. The active participation of all attendees is appreciated. The Network acknowledges the educational grant provided by BENEO-Institute, IFF, PepsiCo Services Asia Ltd and Malaysian Palm Oil Council to support the Network's activities and to enable this webinar to be carried out. The Network also places on record its appreciation to all participants for attending the webinar.

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Report vetted and approved by: Dr Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network

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