RATIONALE

• Changes in lifestyle and epidemiological profile of the population, as well as technological progress and free trade agreements lead to an increased supply in prepackaged foods and ready to eat meals.

• Excessive consumption of processed and ready to eat foods are risk factor of Non Communicable Diseases, global first cause of disability and mortality.

• Food products highlight nutritional and health benefits

• Food labels, printed materials and media advertising are used to promote and disseminate these claims.

• The food label is an essential tool to inform on the nutritional information, facilitates consumers buying choices, promotes healthy diet and better quality of life.

OBJECTIVE

To present the results of queries on nutritional labeling and food advertising received by an interagency and interdisciplinary commission from Costa Rica: Comisión Técnica Consultiva del Valor Nutritivo de los Alimentos.

METHODS

• A standardized procedure was developed by the governmental commission to evaluate the queries.

• Compliance of national legislation was used as criteria for evaluation.

• Seven variables were analyzed and reported for their frequency.

• Processed foods were classified into fifteen categories based on classifications used in the United Kingdom by Nhurchu C et al (2010) and Choices Programme (2011)

RESULTS

• 35 consultations on processed foods manufactured by national (68%) and multinational (32%) industries were attended by the Commission between 2004-2010.

• 73% were related with labeling and 22% on advertising.

• Corrective measures were achieved by: voluntary compliance (26%), attendance by regulation offices (16%), improvement of national regulation (11%) and market food recall (9%).

• Errors found in nutritional labeling may significantly affect the health of specific population groups, such as those with diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular diseases.

CONCLUSIONS

• Critical control nutrients appeared as the main issue according to the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health.

• The commission aimed to improve the quality of the information, of national legislation and protect consumer health.

REFERENCES


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