

Why Health Star Rating (HSR) is not suitable for India?



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Insertion of simplified nutrition information on the front of food packages is a cost-effective strategy to guide consumers to make healthier choices and discourage them from consuming foods that are high in salt, sugar, fat (HFSS) - the critical nutrients causing rise in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). In short, it is a tool that aids consumers in improving their diets. It helps them make an informed decision.

To help consumers make healthier choices, Australia and New Zealand had introduced the voluntary HSR system in 2014. But recent studies shows that the system is highly flawed as unhealthy products are still able to get a high score. This is because the rating is based on the overall nutritional value, and the inclusion of healthy ingredients (i.e. fibre, protein and vitamins) cancel out the unhealthy ingredients (i.e. sugar, saturated fats and salt). More importantly, the system does not effectively assist the vulnerable consumers who need it the most. While HSR does help some middle- to high-income consumers, it does a poor job with respect to consumers of low socio-economic status.

This webinar would be an opportunity for all of us to learn from the national and global experts on the FOPL topic, with focus on HSR vs Warning Label and to discuss challenges, and find a way out to persuade/coerce our regulators to rethink their decision on moving ahead with a HSR label.

* Dr. Lindsey Smith Taillie, PhD, MPH holds degrees from Northwestern University, Yale University, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She is trained as a nutrition epidemiologist and has a decade of experience working in 10 countries to design and evaluate food policies to promote healthier diets, with a strong focus on front-of-package labeling efforts. Dr. Taillie has published over 115 articles in top academic journals and her work on front-of-package labeling has been featured in the New York Times, the Guardian, and other international media outlets.

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