

## To label or not to label



In the past, being fat used to be a sign of wealth and high social status, because only wealthy people would have ample food supply. However, in modern days, people with different classes and social status are able to get any food they want under the success of civilization, resulting in the increased death rates from obesity and chronic diseases which are directly related to eating habits. Some members of society are urging the authorities to legally require warning labels on all food products. The suggestion has sparked a controversial discussion about the effectiveness of food warning labels in promoting healthy eating. In my opinion, putting warning labels on food products is not a feasible and effective way to raise the awareness of the importance of changing into healthy eating habits. In this essay, my stance will be explained in detail.

To begin with, the price is often the most crucial factor for many people while determining what to or not to buy. With the rapid development of economy, the consuming capacity of citizens has difficulty in catching up with the increased commodity price. Besides, nutritious food is pricey nowadays. Restaurant flaunting healthy food are usually more high-end ones. In other words, seldom can the people who are underprivileged may afford the priceless healthy food. Thus, they have no chance but to choose the more affordable food even though there are food warning labels on food products which warn them to eat less. To illustrate, many youngsters tend to eat junk food ranging from hamburgers and fried food in fast food shops, resulting in excessive absorption of high cholesterol and sodium. Therefore, the food warning labels cannot compete with the price tags, which are the first and the only labels for many people when purchasing food. As a result, warning labels just work like displays and often neglected by consumers as they tend to buy cheaper food even when they know that those kinds of products are going to kill them slowly.

Apart from the price, another irresistible temptation about food in high sugar, saturated fat is that they are often tastier than healthy food choice. Getting yourself away from high MSG food is no easy task as people easily get addicted to it. And eventually, even though these are warning labels printed on the food products, they are often neglected by consumers. It is obvious that the attractiveness of food is the factor of

determining what to eat, rarely does the nutrition level become the priority. For instance, while choosing your lunch at Café de Coral, some of the dishes on the menu show a small Chinese label on their nutritious value, indicating those dishes are low in sugar, fat and salt. However, these are hardly chosen by customers. Some may argue that printing warning labels can help foster better understanding of products, but it does not necessarily mean that customers will choose and purchase products that are most beneficial to their health as people easily succumb to temptation. As a result, the effectiveness of warning labels remains to be seen.

Not only are the customers to be responsible, but the manufacturing factory itself is also accountable. Companies are aiming at making profits, and Hong Kong's are no exception. They will take into account many concerns before selling the products. As they are only required to put warning labels on foods, these are no laws or regulations forcing companies to make labels into an eye-catching and bright colour ways. In order to minimize the loss, companies undoubtedly print the warning labels at the corner of the package in the smallest size. The effectiveness of labels is hindered due to the market strategy imposed by companies. Consequently, it has difficulty in arousing people's eating habits and raising their awareness of healthy diet.

To conclude, putting warning labels on food products that are high in sugar, saturated fat and salt is not an effective and a feasible way to change people eating habits as there are a lot of temptations and the inadequate government intervention under the law. To alleviate the problem, instead of legalizing food warning labels, why not illegalize the foods that are harmful to people? Stir-fried flat rice noodles with beef is not allowed in Singapore because of its unhealthy and oily way of cooking. It is high time the government took the lead to drive away unhealthy food.