
What's in our food? – launch of media campaign in Jamaica

Since World Diabetes Day on 14 November 2019, the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the National Consumers' League, has been leading a new mass media campaign to encourage Jamaicans to make healthier choices.

The new campaign tagline is: **"What's in Our Food? Give us the Facts"**

The campaign urges Jamaicans to think about the content of ultra-processed foods and demand clear nutritional labels to inform them about foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat. Excess consumption of these foods increases the risk of overweight and obesity and chronic diseases like Type 2 diabetes, cancer, hypertension, and heart disease. Currently, more than half (54 %) of Jamaicans are overweight or obese, and obesity rates among 13-15 year-olds have increased rapidly by 68% between 2010 and 2017.

Deborah Chen, Executive Director of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica, said "Our campaign message is: *What's in Our Food? Give us the Facts*, because Jamaicans have a right to know what's in their food. That information also needs to be prominent, clear and easy to understand, because shoppers don't have a lot of time to make purchasing decisions. Our research confirms that consumers find existing food labels hard to read and understand, making it more difficult for them to make healthier choices. We encourage consumers to use this campaign to call for a better food labelling system – one that can help them protect their health and the health of their loved ones."

There is strong public support for clear food labelling, according to research commissioned by the HFJ. Findings show that more than half (55%) of Jamaicans agree that it takes too much time to read current nutrition labels on food packaging, and more than four in five Jamaicans (82 %) strongly agree that clear labels on the front of food and beverage packaging would help to reduce obesity.

Findings also show that **92 % of Jamaicans would support government implementing a front-of-pack labelling policy** as part of its strategy to promote healthier diets and reduce obesity.

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