

Government Urged To Implement 'Traffic Light' Food Nutrition Labelling
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PETALING JAYA, March 14 (Bernama) -- The government has been urged to implement a 'traffic light labelling' concept to ease consumers in identifying and differentiating healthy food products that are available in the market.

The Head of International Consumers Office for Asia Pacific and the Middle East, Datuk Indrani Thuraisingham said the traffic light rating system on food was important as consumers frequently purchased food without knowing the nutrition content of a product.

"The traffic light rating concept is a nutritional classification label placed on the food packaging, it will show how much fat, saturated fats, sugar, and salt are in the food.

"For example, red label indicates high content of salt and monosodium glutamate (MSG), yellow for high content of fat and green is for food with high content of calcium, protein and iron," she told Bernama when met on the sidelines of the 2015 World Consumer Rights Day held at a supermarket here, Saturday.

Indrani said the concept would bring more positive impact on consumer behavior when they purchased food items as it would make it easier for consumers to find out about the nutrition content without reading the nutrition facts on the food packaging.

"There are some consumers who do not like to read nutrition information before buying any food items, or they are just ignorant to understand the terms used such as what MSG is all about," she said.

Indrani said information on food nutrition needed to be placed on the front of the food packaging as a reminder to educate the consumers in choosing food products.

"Based on research, one of the buying habits among consumers is that they have the tendency to look for attractive food packaging without knowing the nutrition facts, this is among the reasons consumers are not being educated on nutrients.

Therefore, the traffic light rating system must be implemented as the level of obesity in Malaysia was quite alarming, with the World Health Organization (WHO) placing Malaysia among the highest in terms of obesity rate in South East Asia and the sixth highest in the Asia Pacific region, she said.

"Every year, people are dying because of obesity rather than smoking where the total of deaths from smoking is six million while death associated with obesity is 11 million a year, the figure is very shocking," she added.

The World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated on March 15, every year and this year's theme is 'Healthy Diets'.

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