



**IN PROTECTIVE HEALTH  
REFORMULATION OF FOOD PRODUCTS  
WORKSHOP  
RESULT REPORT  
22 June 2023  
Ankara Türkiye**

A workshop hosted by the Gastroenterology Dietitian Association was held in Ankara-Turkey on 22 June 2023 to discuss the factors that enable “food reformulation” as part of the national nutrition strategies in Turkey. The workshop brought together more than 55 stakeholders, including the TR Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Health, universities, dietitians, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The workshop has been a platform for informing and discussing the issue with scientific evidence-based data behind the safety and use of additives in order to reduce the potential risk and to eliminate the misconceptions that regulators may have about the safety of food additives and especially additives such as sugar and salt that raise concerns. It was a meeting where interactive participation was ensured and high-level information sharing was provided where suggestions were received from stakeholders.

Reformulation of Food Products is one of the main policies proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to improve the food environment and public health. Food reformulation policies are an important part of a range of policy actions to support healthy and sustainable diets. It can contribute to ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all and the transition to healthier and more sustainable consumption habits because individuals do not have to change the food they buy or make a conscious effort to find healthier options.

Reformulation aims to reduce target nutrients without increasing energy content (such as sugar) or nutrients of concern (such as salt) to ensure that better quality food options are available to consumers.

This workshop provided regulatory agencies, public health professionals, dietitians, and scientists an opportunity to share and discuss the latest current evidence and best practices on food reformulation, with a focus on food additives in food and beverages.

## Workshop Topic-Current Information

Energy-dense and nutrient-poor foods are widely available on the food market. As a result, many people consume large amounts of foods high in fat, sugar, and salt/sodium; This contributes to an unhealthy diet. This causes 8 million premature deaths worldwide each year. In recent years, legislators have increasingly recognized the need for action to increase and provide information to educate consumers, as well as to make the food supply and food environment healthier.

**Science and Technology in Childhood** A recent review of the impact of food reformulation on food choices, nutrient intake, and health status was conducted as part of the Obesity Project STOP. The review showed that people generally accept, buy and consume reformed products, which is manifested by an overall improvement in the nutrient composition of their food intake, particularly reducing salt, which is more acceptable to consumers. In general, food reformulation tends to lead to improved nutrient intake. Reducing the amount of salt, trans fatty acids, and sugars in reformulation were prominent examples.

Reformulating food and drink is important for sustainable health. In a sustainable world, food additives contribute to health, environment and economy. Food and Beverage reformulation is critical in realizing national nutrition strategies and improving public health. The safety of sugar alternatives, such as sweeteners, is constantly reviewed by public health officials. All sweeteners are within the limits of "acceptable risk" if used within the established acceptable daily intake (ADI; Acceptable Daily Intake).

"Turkey sugar consumption/use reduction guide" signed in Ankara in 2021 with the commitment of industry participants to high sugar-including foods in society consumption reduction of the manufacturers more little sugar including products to produce and consumption reduction for developed strategies place gives. Eating and drinking too many calories can contribute to weight gain and obesity. A balanced lifestyle is key to successful weight management leads to health problems such as obesity, which threatens public health. In order to improve and develop public health, it is possible to provide both energy intake and healthier foods by reformulation and developing healthy alternatives to foods that will stimulate high energy intake (such as sugar) and health problems in continuous consumption (such as salt). Obesity, which is one of the serious health problems, leads to other chronic diseases. Today, obesity is one of the serious health problems not only in Turkey but also in many countries. Obesity causes non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, Type II diabetes, and some cancers. It brings an extra burden to the country's economy by causing deterioration in the quality of life and an increase in health expenditures. The main strategy that helps to prevent the occurrence of these health problems or can have a protective effect is to pay attention to eating habits. The potential of nutrition to play an active role is that individuals need nutrients to maintain their long and continuous (from birth to the end of life) lives.

The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to accelerate the transition to a sustainable food system. Adapting to environmental impact, climate change and its effects, reversing the loss of biodiversity, and improving food security and public health by providing access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and sustainable food are important aspects of sustainability.

## Workshop Program

Within the scope of the workshop,

- Issues of global concern
- The necessity, importance, and benefits of reformulation
- The importance of transitioning to a sustainable food system
- Strategies for improving and promoting food additives and community health
- Health risks related to diet are inevitable. According to the basic teaching of toxicology, "Every chemical is toxic, it is the dose that separates the chemical and the harmful", health risks are inevitable when normal use is exceeded.
- How to ensure sustainable safety with daily, lifetime exposure to food additives without adverse health effects
- With the risk analysis (safety assessment) methodology, food safety can be provided with evidence-based scientific data,
- Zero risk will not exist not only in food but also in any activity of human life, but acceptable risk limits can be reached, which are globally accepted as safe for public health,
- The necessity of developing risk communication, which is an important component of risk analysis, according to the consumer's risk perception
- The necessity of effective and accurate risk communication for correct public perception,
- Structures of authorities responsible for food safety around the world
- World Health Organization (WHO) Organization WHO)- Nutrition Guidance and Advisory Group (NUGAG; Nutrition Guidance and Advisory Group (July 2022) published with scientific contribution "sugar-free sweeteners (Non-Sugar Examination of scientific outputs related to "Sweeteners, NSS) usage guide"

Topics highlighting important points such as.

## Highlights and Decisions Taken in the Discussions at the Workshop

1. At the workshop, the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization WHO)- Nutritional Guidance and Advisory Group (NUGAG; Nutrition Guidance and Advisory Group (July 2022) published with the scientific contribution "sugar-free sweeteners (Non-Sugar Sweeteners, NSS) it is stated that artificial sweeteners used as sugar substitutes in a wide variety of products do not help with weight loss and can have serious effects on health. In summary, in this guideline, WHO states that a systematic review of the available evidence "suggests that the use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children" and "results from the review "results from NSS in adults such as increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and death. " Our speaker Dr. Tauseef A. Khan from the University of Toronto, Canada. In the workshop, he examined each output in the guide in detail on a study basis and shared his findings with the participants by giving examples. Precautionary matters that are overlooked in this guide are listed. Some of those;
  - In the guide, the evaluation of scientific data is decided by studies that do not comply with the scientific evidence pyramid, which is the international standard (for example, while there are randomized controlled studies, less valuable prospective studies are available). evaluation of cohort studies)



- The final result cannot be reached by establishing a causal relationship with the data obtained from the prospective controlled studies due to the nature of the design of the study. For example, it cannot be concluded that sweetener increases or decreases diabetes.
  - Results may be due to reverse-causality and confusion.
  - It is difficult to draw firm conclusions due to the diversity of participants and the complexity of using NSS.
  - The reason for not including diabetics in the study or exclusion was not included.
  - The WHO's conditional recommendations suggest that the scientific basis of the report is not sufficient and that there is prejudice. It shows that the evidence is inconclusive or insufficient, thus uncertainties prevail.
  - No policy changes were made in the UK and other countries upon this report of WHO. It would be wise for each country to make its own decision on this issue. prospective causality cannot be established and final conclusions cannot be reached with cohort studies. For example, it cannot be concluded that it increases or decreases with diabetes.
  - UK's Dr. Vicki Pyne RNutr shared similar views on the guideline and stated that most studies have investigated NNS in beverages, so less is known about NNS in foods and that the available evidence will not change their views on sweetener use in the UK, but is aware that there are gaps in the evidence base.
2. UK's Dr. Vicki Pyne RNutr has shared studies on sweeteners and reformulation in England, and the decisions taken on a country basis on this subject are listed below.
- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) provides advice on food safety issues, including the use of sweeteners.
  - Sweeteners used in food and beverages in the UK have undergone a rigorous safety assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Approved by EFSA's processes, sweeteners are considered a safe and acceptable alternative to sugar.
  - FSA and OHID, EFSA's He continues to support his scientific view of the safety and use of NNSs .
  - UK legislation determines how much sweetener can be used in which products.
  - In the UK, manufacturers must list sweeteners in the ingredients of prepackaged foods and beverages, but do not have to specify concentrations.
- Global examples of successful reformulation practices are presented.
3. Global examples of successful reformulation practices are presented.
4. In the workshop, the TR Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, TR Ministry of Health, and scientists drew attention to food, nutrition, and health literacy in the eyes of consumers. It has been pointed out that the opinions of experts in traditional and social media published on health and food issues are based on evidence-based scientific data and are open to development by the public, NGOs, and health professionals in order to prevent information pollution, and a workshop in this direction has been requested by the participants. At the end of the workshop, interactions were started with the necessary places in order to organize an event related to “food, nutrition, and health literacy”, which is one of the outputs of this workshop, in order to reach wider audiences.

5. It has been decided that there is a lack of data on some food additives and general food consumption, that this joint deficiency should be completed with the cooperation established with the academy, and that statistical evaluations will be provided for improving public health and safe food, and with these data, it will be effective in improving public health.
6. It was emphasized that detailed food consumption study should be done in order to be able to evaluate the risk of dietary food additives in Turkey. It has been argued that the reliable data required for an accurate and reliable risk assessment can only be obtained by using accurate and recorded consumption information, and that robust regulations will come into force with this data.

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