

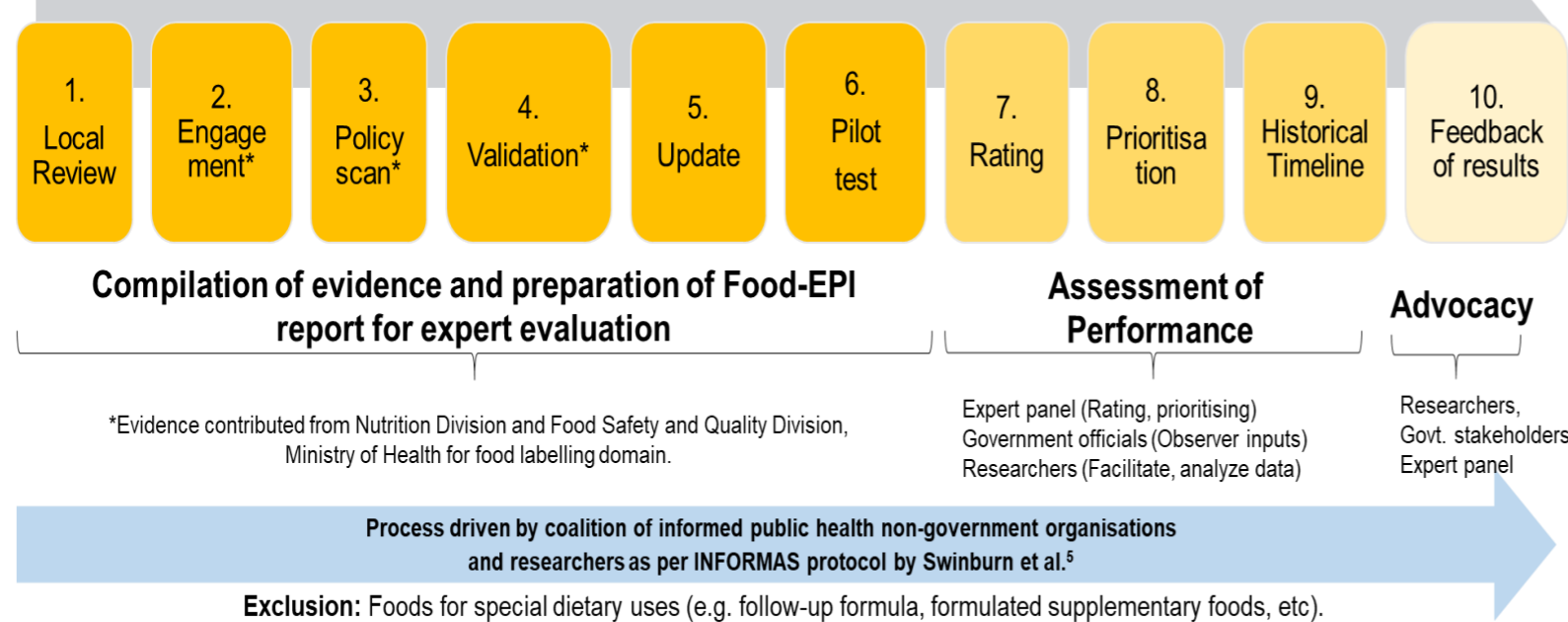
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Background

- Nutrition labelling is a strategy to promote healthy diets, and is recognised as a policy measure to create informed choices.¹
- To date, 53% of the 121-member countries of the World Health Organisation have implemented mandatory nutrient declaration variously (18% for added sugars, 25% for trans-fat, 60% for saturated fat, and 71% for sodium and total sugars), 35% for front-of-pack labelling and 11% for menu labelling.² Malaysia is an early implementer to introduce mandatory nutrition labelling in South East Asia.³
- A recent Malaysian food environment policy analyses prioritised food labelling as among top 5 policies requiring critical attention.⁴
- Objectives:** This study aimed to (1) examine the degree of implementation of policies related to nutrition labelling, against international benchmarks and (2) map the historical timeline of relevant policies related to food labelling in Malaysia.

Methodology



Policy recommendations

- To implement the planned regulations on mandatory nutrition labelling (sodium, total sugars) and quantitative ingredient declarations, but include added sugars in the nutrient label. **[Top 2]**
- To require all fast food chain outlets (>20 outlets nationally) to display calorie labelling on menu boards and promote their use in other food outlets (e.g. *mamak* stalls). **[Top 5]**



Results

Table 1 Summary of food labelling policies in Malaysia and mean implementation rating by experts (n=26)

Policies ⁶⁻⁹	Details	Mean ratings (95% CI)*
Ingredient list [Reg. 11.1 (e)]	1. To be declared in descending order of proportion by weight.	
Mandatory nutrition labelling [Reg. 18B, Gazettement No. P.U. (A) 88]	1. Mandatory nutrition labelling (including energy, protein, carbohydrate and fat) for 56 types of frequently consumed foods (Fig. 2). 2. Mandatory to label total sugars for ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages (e.g. soft drink, juices, RTD malted milk or flavoured milk). 3. Mandatory to label 4 types of fatty acid (SFA, MUFA, PUFA & TFA), if a claim is made.	61.2 (55.1, 67.2) [Medium implementation]
Nutrition claims - Food Regulations 1985 [Reg.18C-E, 26]	1. All packaged foods are eligible to display 4 types of nutrition claims including (1) Nutrient Content Claim, (2) Nutrient Comparative Claims, (3) Nutrient Function Claims and (4) Claims for enrichment, fortification. [NOTE: Health claims are prohibited]. 2. No specific nutrient profiling scoring for nutrition claims, but foods label with "nutritious" or similar significance shall fulfill the criteria (without sugars and fat cut-off) according to Reg. [No. 18 (8)].	55.8 (48.4, 63.1) [Medium implementation]
Front-of-pack (FOP) labelling	1. Voluntary single energy icon since 2012 (based on a daily calorie intake of 2000kcal). 2. Healthier Choice Logo as one of the national plans (voluntary).	47.7 (41.1, 54.3) [Low implementation]
Guideline on the Advertising & Nutrition Information Labelling of Fast Foods 2009	1. Nutrition information needs to be labelled including energy, carbohydrate, protein, fat, salt (food only) and sugar (beverage only), either on packaging, boxes, tray placement, brochures, pamphlets or posters (voluntary).	44.2 (38.0, 50.5) [Low implementation]

*Note: Very little, if any (<25%), Low (26-50%), Medium (51-75%) and High (>75%)

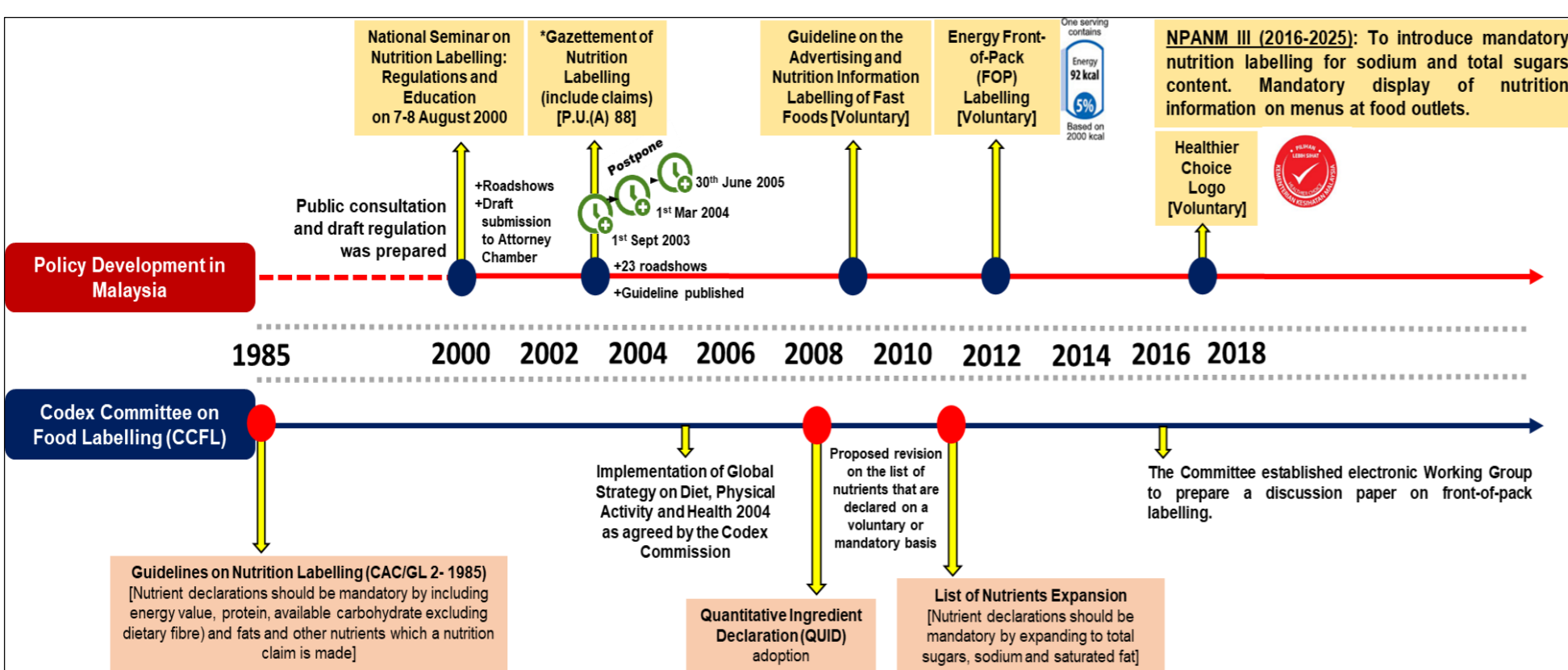


Figure 1 Historical timeline of nutrition labelling in Malaysia against Codex development



Figure 2 Reference food categories (n=56) requiring mandatory nutrition labelling

Conclusions

- Policy mapping in Malaysia gave insights into the time required for and context of policy development and implementation.
- The Big4 (energy, carbohydrate, protein and fat) for back-of-pack labelling for selected food categories was gazetted since 2003, but disease specific nutrients such as sodium and total sugars (except ready-to-drink beverages) are slow to be enacted through regulation.
- CODEX Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling set total sugars and sodium as mandatory since 2011, and Malaysia has intentions¹⁰ in this area.
- Malaysian experts have prioritised policy action to declare sodium, total and added sugars on nutrition labels.
- It appears research should target identifying facilitators and challenges in policy development and implementation.

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