

OVERVIEW CHOICES ACTIONS 2015

June 2016

Foundation's report

In this report we highlight the activities and actions of Choices International Foundation in 2015.

In 2015 the Choices identity as a multi-stakeholder platform with clear and well-respected roles for industry, science and governments has been further acknowledged in the international arena. The strengthening of the Choices reputation in international networks has increased the interest of countries and stakeholders when it comes to participation and collaboration.

1 International stakeholder management

Choices builds on an extensive network of international stakeholders from health authorities, science and industry. In order to align with international developments, to find new ways of collaboration and new partners and to enforce its credibility. In 2015 Choices further strengthened its contact with important international stakeholder networks as follows:

WHO: Choices participated in the Technical Meeting on Nutrition Labelling for Promoting Healthy Diets, Lisbon, 9-11 December 2015. Choices also gave input to the PAHO discussion on nutrient profiling.

WEF: Choices is described as a successful public-private partnership for health in the World Economic Forum report "How to realize returns on Health?" [[hyperlink](#)], issued January 2016.

CGF: Choices attended the Consumer Goods Forum Summit and participated actively as a member of the working group on labelling. This working group develops concrete actions for the labelling ambitions of the CGF Health & Wellness strategy. Choices has been included in the CGF Health & Wellness Toolkit [[hyperlink](#)] as an example of how a CGF member company could implement the H&W ambitions.

2 Science

The scientific backbone of the Choices organisation is indispensable for the high quality of its output and its credibility in the professional world. In 2015 this scientific backbone has been greatly enforced.

1. The International Scientific Committee welcomed three new members and is now composed of:
 - Prof. B. Popkin, University of North Carolina, USA
 - Prof. R. Uauy, University of Chile
 - Prof. A. Kurpad, St. John's Research Institute Bangalore, India
 - Prof. Lauren Lissner, University of Göteborg, Sweden
 - Prof. Yang Yuexin, Chair of the Chinese Nutrition Society
2. The European Scientific Committee (ESC) has determined its new role. It has been concluded that specific regional criteria, e.g. for Europe or Latin America do not have much added value. The regional Scientific

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Committees will now focus on scientific cooperation and support of 'new' countries. ESC members now play an active role in exploring the possibilities of national programmes in Austria, Israel, Turkey and the Balkan region.

3. New Scientific Committees have been established in Poland, Belgium and the Czech Republic. Each committee consists of 7-10 independent leading food and nutrition scientists from different universities. All three have started their work on the national adaptation of the criteria and the revision of the former ones.
4. All in all 50 independent leading food & nutrition scientists from 16 countries on four continents work with Choices on a *pro bono* basis.
5. Internationally and in the Netherlands the criteria revision has led to the issuing of a new set of criteria [link].
6. The Choices Young Scientists Network was initiated. More and more young scientist in more and more countries, including Master and PhD students, are working on Choices related studies. Bringing them together in an informal online network can improve their studies and strengthen the Choices scientific network.
7. Choices organized an informal dinner during the FENS Nutrition Conference in Berlin, that has been attended by 15 scientists, to strengthen the scientific network.
8. Choices scientists Léon Jansen and Annet Roodenburg issued the publication *The use of food composition data in the Choices International Programme* [link] in Food Chemistry (2015). This publication has been read 600 times and quoted 70 times in 2015.
9. Choices is active in the EU funded CLYMBOL research consortium, where it co-initiated in 2015 the study on the impact on the market of the introduction of Choices in the Netherlands and Keyhole in Denmark.
10. Two updates of the Choices Research Overview have been issued and presented on the Choices website. The research overview has been downloaded 113 times in 2015.
11. The following new studies have been initiated, in cooperation with different academic partners and external funding:
 - How the Choices criteria can have impact on innovation, in cooperation with Wageningen UR
 - Ethical considerations of health innovation, in cooperation with Wageningen UR
 - PhD study KU Louvain on the impact of the introduction of the Choices logo in the Netherlands
 - Impact studies are initiated on:
 - the impact of introduction of Choices on sales of different products in retail
 - the development in the nutritional composition of Choices bearing products in NL
 - Exploratory discussions are taking place with IFPRI, Wageningen UR and GAIN on including Choices in the CGIAR A4NH Flagship project *Food systems for a Healthier Diets* and focusing this project on logo developments in Vietnam and Nigeria.

3 Growth in countries

Based on a good international reputation and a strong scientific network, Choices has been able to make progress in developing networks and initiatives in a number of countries around the globe.

Asia:

- Choices is part of the SE Asia group for a positive FOP logo. Member countries are: **China, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei**. Choices co-organized two workshops for this group in Bangkok with the Thai FDA and in Kuala Lumpur with the Malaysian Ministry of Health. The aim of both workshops was to enforce the coherence in criteria and to support the country initiatives. Thailand and Malaysia have official support for their labelling initiatives that will lead to launches in 2016. Singapore has a well established logo already for 20 years, that can be found on more than 1500 products. Brunei also works with the Singapore

logo. Choices gave workshops on criteria setting in Malaysia and China for the teams that work on criteria adaptation. Choices has been introduced successfully in **Vietnam** and consequently is now supported to propose a national logo programme and become a member of the SE Asia group in 2016. Contacts with **Indonesia** are refreshed and kept on hold until the first logo initiatives are launched in the region.

- Choices visited **India** twice to discuss the start of a logo initiative. A Core Group is now established with ISC member Anura Kurpad and representatives from Aditya Birla Retail and Unilever, to prepare a further discussion in the country, especially with the government (FSSAI) and to get more companies involved.
- Choices visited **Kuwait** and **Saudi Arabia**, with support of the Dutch Embassies in Riyadh and Kuwait, to raise awareness for action against obesity and NCDs and to start a labelling initiative. Contacts with government, companies and scientists are established and will be further developed in 2016.

Latin America

- Choices is involved in the national labelling discussion in **Brazil and Colombia** and in the **PAHO** discussion on nutrient profiling.
- In **Argentina** the ProDANyS programme, based on the Choices criteria, has been re-organized to a national programme, which facilitates further growth.

Europe:

- In **the Netherlands and the Czech Republic** the national Choices programmes are well established, with a consumer awareness of resp 95% and 46%; 7,000 resp. 380 logo bearing products and a well functioning Foundation Board, secretariat and Scientific Committee.
- In **Belgium** Choices is activating companies and stakeholders to re-start a national Choices programme in 2016. This included the start of a new and more balanced Belgian Scientific Committee and two presentations for food industry organisations. The initiative now lies in the hands of the Federal Parliament and Federal Government to come up with a proposal.
The KU Louvain has initiated a PhD study in collaboration with Choices on the impact of the introduction of the logo in the Netherlands, to generate insights that could be helpful for the implementation discussion in Belgium.
- In **Poland** a cooperation is established with consultancy LB Relations, to generate more business membership and stakeholder involvement. The Scientific Committee has been initiated successfully and is fully engaged in the development of new Polish criteria. The Committee is highly involved in the national discussion on criteria for school food.
- Choices is cooperating with scientists and companies in **Austria and Turkey** to see if a network can be set up as a start for a national programme, based on the EU approval of the Choices logo in the Netherlands.
- Choices cooperates with the **Dutch** Ministry of Health in the preparation of the conference on food product improvement that will take place 22-23 February 2016 in Amsterdam as part of the Dutch EU Presidency in 2016. Choices will organize a special session on front-of-pack labels, in which the four major FOP labels in Europe will be presented: Keyhole, Heart Logo, Traffic Light and Choices.
- In a meeting with a member of Parliament in **France**, Choices has been presented within the discussion on a French colour coded GDA system. The French discussion is still ongoing.

USA

- An initiative has been taken by retailers and ISC to develop Choices based criteria for the USA. This will materialize in 2016.

Africa

- Contacts with the **Nigerian** Heart Foundation have been established, as this foundation operates a positive logo as well and is interested in international cooperation. This contact can be relevant as Nigeria is indicated as one of the spearhead countries in the IFPRI project on *Food Systems for Healthier Diets*.

4 Governance

In 2015 the Choices Board consisted of:

- Clémence Ross, independent President
- Angelika de Bree, Unilever (secretary)
- Werner Buck, FrieslandCampina (treasurer)
- Emma Coles, Ahold (observer)
- Barry Popkin (scientific advisor)
- Rutger Schilpzand (advisor on behalf of the secretariat).

The Board met 4 times and adopted a new strategy, broadening the scope from the single Choices logo to being an accelerator in the international movement towards healthier food. The science based criteria are the cornerstone of the Choices programme. The Choices label remains the flag ship of the organisation, but healthy product offerings and product reformulation took a more important place in the strategy. New financial opportunities have been outlined: to be more active and attractive towards international companies and to seek for innovative ways of funding and collaboration. These actions have been initiated in 2015 and are expected to bear fruit from 2016 onwards.

The **Advisory Group** met 4 times in 2015. Members are:

- Carla Nijman (Unilever)
- Petra Dekker (FrieslandCampina global)
- Hendro Poedjono (FrieslandCampina Asia)
- Rutger Schilpzand (Choices secretariat)

Onno Franse left the Advisory Group in 2015 following the discontinuation of his work with Ahold.

5 Communication

Two new brochures have been produced, based on the new strategy, one for business relations and the other for government experts. In addition, a flyer was produced showing the 'nutrition labelling pressure' around the world. This material is distributed at meetings or conferences and in personal meetings.

The Choices website counted 7,040 visitors in 2015 which is satisfactory for a website that is exclusively aimed at a selected group of experts and stakeholders. On average visitors remained on the site for 2 1/2 minutes, which is remarkably long. The top 3 countries where the visitors came from were the USA, the Netherlands and the UK. News items are placed on the website almost on a weekly basis. Tweets are sent out approximately every second day to 200+ followers.

The Choices criteria, both international as well as the different others, were downloaded appr. 750x. The total number of downloaded documents was 1461.

Every two months a Newsletter was issued to the 1,000+ relations in the Choices database. Also bi-monthly a country update is issued for the Choices country teams.

6 Business partners

As part of the new strategy, Choices aims at broadening its business base by inviting more companies to join the International Board. A number of companies have been approached; some of which showed serious interest. This action will be continued in 2016.