

Health Promotion Board's Food Strategy Aims to Change the Way Singaporeans Eat at Home and Eat Out

HPB targets 180 million healthier eat-out meals consumed annually by 2020

4 June 2014 – Singaporeans can look forward to more options for eating healthily as the Health Promotion Board (HPB) announces its Food Strategy to help change Singaporeans' diet when they dine out and eat at home. Through the Food Strategy, people would have more healthier food choices that are affordable and accessible. The first phase of the Food Strategy sees some 700 food outlets and stalls island-wide serving 500-calorie meals. More than 50 percent of these outlets and stalls have also committed to using healthier ingredients, namely healthier oils and/or whole grains.

The National Nutrition Survey 2010 showed a worrying deterioration in the dietary quality of Singaporeans. In addition, an increasing number of Singaporeans are also consuming more calories than they need on a daily basis with six in ten exceeding their recommended energy intake¹. While Singaporeans' diet is nutritionally adequate in protein, vitamins and minerals², they are eating more saturated fat and insufficient amounts of whole grains. Singaporeans are consuming too much refined carbohydrates such as white rice, which has been linked to increased risk of developing diabetes, especially in Asian countries.

The Food Strategy is one of the key initiatives to realise the vision of the Healthy Living Master Plan, announced in April this year. The accessibility to healthier food is one of the commitments made by HPB and the Ministry of Health to provide Singaporeans with at least three healthy living options near their home, office and schools by 2020.

The Food Strategy

The Food Strategy comprises three key initiatives which are underpinned by strong partnerships with the Food & Beverage industry –

- a) the Healthier Dining Programme
- b) the increased availability of less sweetened beverages
- c) the increased availability of Healthier Choice products.

HPB is taking a phased approach over six months to implement the three key initiatives, starting with the launch of the Healthier Dining Programme.

¹ Daily recommended energy allowance for men is 2,600 calories and for women is 2,000 calories. According to the National Nutrition Survey 2010 (NNS 2010), the average daily intake of Singaporeans is over 2600 kcal.

² Intakes are benchmarked against the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for energy and nutrients set at a level that can meet the needs of nearly all (98%) people in the population.

The Healthier Dining Programme

The Healthier Dining Programme marks a scaling up of HPB's pilot Healthier Hawker Programme launched in 2012. HPB has been working with some ingredient suppliers and individual hawkers to increase the availability and use of healthier ingredients through a subsidy scheme. HPB has applied the learnings from this pilot, namely to influence all key aspects of the supply chain, work with eateries with multiple outlets and caterers, and to generate consumer demand for healthier food options. Going forward, the ingredient subsidy under the Healthier Hawker Programme will be extended to all qualified wholesalers who commit to distribute healthier ingredients to eateries to promote the use of healthier ingredients. Details of this subsidy will be announced in due course.

The Healthier Dining Programme marks the first phase of the Food Strategy which aims to increase the number of healthier eat-out meals consumed to 180 million meals per year, or 20% of all eat-out meals, by 2020. For a start, HPB is partnering with 18 food service providers to offer 500-calorie meals across some 700 outlets and stalls island-wide. The food service providers comprise restaurant chains, food court chains, caterers and quick service providers. (The full list of partners is at **Annex A**)

The National Nutrition Survey 2010 showed that 60 per cent of Singapore residents eat out at least four times a week. Due to this frequency, it is easy for Singaporeans to exceed their recommended daily energy intake as an eat-out meal contains an average of 700-800 calories³. Currently, one percent or less of the eat-out meals consumed by Singaporeans are healthier meals⁴.

In active support of HPB's goals, some restaurant chains and fast service restaurants have already self-initiated marketing of healthier food options. For example, Fish & Co. is offering 11 500-calorie meals priced around 40 per cent cheaper than the regular menu items. Loving Hut, an international franchise of vegan restaurants introduced 15 choices of 500-calorie dishes, including one of their signature dishes, Nyonya Laksa Lemak. Soup Restaurant has created new healthier versions of their signature dishes, for example, Earthen Bowl Steamed Rice with Chicken and Samsui Ginger Sauce which is served with brown rice as a default.

Partner caterers are also actively incentivising their customers to make healthier choices and creating innovative and attractive healthier food items. For instance, Saybons gives a fifty-cent rebate per person to customers who opt for iced water instead of sugared beverages for its catering service. Saybons has also introduced Skinny Crepes that have fewer calories than regular crepes, and a 4-course Skinny Crepe Set meal that is below 500 calories as part of the Healthier Dining Programme.

³ National Nutrition Survey, 2010

⁴ National Nutrition Survey, 2010

Partner food court chains, Kopitiam and Foodfare, will be requiring their new and renewing tenants to include at least one 500-calorie meal option in their menus in support of the Healthier Dining Programme.

HPB and its partners believe that tasty food can be healthier and nutritious, and every effort has been made to ensure that taste is not compromised. Singaporeans will enjoy such healthier meals at more food outlets across Singapore with the Healthier Dining programme.

To support partner restaurants' marketing efforts, HPB is launching its Healthy Go Lucky campaign to generate demand for healthier meals.

For more information on the Healthier Dining Programme, please refer to the following link: <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/healthier-dining-partners-application>

Cutting empty calories from sweetened beverages

The National Nutrition Survey 2010 showed an increase in the proportion of Singaporeans who add sugar to their beverages. Currently, 60 percent of Singaporeans consume two or more sweetened drinks a day. On average, sweetened beverages contributed about 200 calories to Singaporeans' daily calorie intake, mostly in the form of empty calories, which make them feel hungry more quickly and easily, and hence likely to consume more food than necessary.

HPB aims to reduce sugar intake among Singaporeans by working with partners to encourage Singaporeans to consume less sugared beverages in food courts and coffee shops. HPB will also work with major drink players to increase the availability of reduced-sugar drinks and water products in community, schools and workplaces.

Healthier Choice Products

The National Nutrition Survey 2010 showed that Singaporeans who include Healthier Choice products in their diet have significantly better nutritional profiles and are more than twice as likely to meet nutrient recommendations.

Hence, to encourage Singaporeans to choose healthier food option when they are eating at home, HPB will work with food manufacturers to grow the variety of Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) products to increase consumer choices.

In addition, HPB will work with supermarket chains to make more of these HCS products more affordable and accessible to Singaporeans eating at home.

Annex A

List of partners of the Healthier Dining Programme:

1. Char Grill Bar
2. Dian Xiao Er
3. Fish & CO
4. Formosa Delight
5. Jack's Place
6. Kopitiam
7. Loving Hut
8. McDonald's
9. NTUC Food Fare
10. Preparazzi
11. Quiznos Sub
12. Saybons
13. Smoothie King
14. Sodexo
15. Soup Restaurant
16. SUBWAY
17. Swensen's
18. The Wok People