

  
**CONGRESS  
2021**

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**24th Biennial International  
Virtual Congress**  
20 - 22 September 2021



## **Nutrition Labelling: What Makes the South African Consumer Tick?**

Dr Nelene Koen

Stellenbosch University, South Africa

### **Abstract**

Nutrition labelling, the section of information on the food label that declares nutrient content, is an important component of the food label and considered a relatively low-cost, population wide intervention to educate consumers and reduce non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs are the leading causes of death globally, killing more people each year than all other causes combined. In South Africa, with the rise in urbanisation and industrialisation, and concomitant economic and nutrition transition, as well as health services that are not always adequately equipped to deal with the issues, more people are becoming ill and dying from NCDs. Nutrition labelling and consumer knowledge, use and understanding have been investigated extensively in developed countries. These studies have reported associations between consumers who use (read, understand and utilise) the nutrition information on food labels, and more healthful food choices. There is, however, mixed evidence with respect to the ease or difficulty of using the nutrition information on food labels and this is also dependent on the demographic profile of consumers. It has been widely reported that some consumers struggle to understand the nutrition information on food labels and many have difficulty with the quantitative information presented, preferring labels using graphics and symbols, adjective labels and labels with minimal numerical content. Limited research has been done since the implementation of the current labelling regulations to investigate nutrition labelling and the South African consumer. The majority of studies conducted are regional studies with relatively small sample sizes. This presentation will focus on research done in South African in the last 10 years. It will provide a summary of the published evidence to date on the South African consumer and nutrition labelling and will explore consumer behaviour, barriers, and nutrition labelling needs.

### **Biography: Dr Nelene Koen**

Dr Nelene Koen is a registered dietitian and senior lecturer in the Division of Human Nutrition, Department of Global Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University. She coordinates and teaches various undergraduate and postgraduate modules, provide post-graduate study supervision to Master of Therapeutic Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition and Food and Nutrition Security students and is actively involved in research related to food and nutrition labelling in South Africa, the South African sodium regulations and health promotion levy. She has presented her research at various national and

international congresses and has published in several accredited peer-reviewed journals.

She is the recipient of the Stellenbosch University Rector's award for Excellence in Teaching. Her main areas of interest falls within the public health nutrition domain and includes food and nutrition labelling, population-wide strategies to combat non-communicable diseases, organic foods and GMOs.

She is married and lives in Cape Town. She has two sons, Niel and Francois.