EATING OUT-OF-HOME IN THE PHILIPPINES: CURRENT SITUATION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Josie P. Desnacido, Apple Joy D. Ducay and Marina B. Vargas, Ph.D

Background:
Eating out-of-home and consuming ready-to-eat prepared foods have been increasingly practiced as a result of social, cultural and environmental changes. This scenario is potentially worrying as mounting evidence revealed that frequent out-of-home consumption contributes to individual's high energy intakes that may lead to overweight and obesity.

Objectives:
This study aimed to assess the current situation of eating out-of-home in the Philippines and to provide policy recommendation based on the study findings.

Materials and Methods:
Data of individual food intake were taken from the Food Consumption Survey among adults aged 19-59 years old of the National Nutrition Survey (NNS) conducted by the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI) in 2013. Data were also extracted from the Food Establishments Survey (FES), of the Local Level Food, Health and Nutrition Survey (LFHNS) which was conducted in 2016 to 2017. Policy recommendation was formulated during a three-day workshop conducted by DOST-FNRI on Capability Building on Policy Translation and Advocacy: Empowering R&D and S&T DOST Staff in September 2018. Descriptive statistics such as means and percentages were generated using Stata version 12.

Results and Findings:
Results revealed that 4 out of 10 Filipino adults are out-of-home eaters. Younger adults aged 19-29 years old (50%), females (47.1%), urban residents (52.1%) belonging to the richest quintile (60.2%) and students (71.1%) are consuming more meals out-of-home than their adult counterparts. Filipino adults who were more likely to eat foods out-of-home were overweight (OR 1.33, 95% CI=1.1-1.6) and obese (OR 1.57, 95% CI=1.1-2.3), with high waist circumference (OR 1.30, 95% CI=1.1-1.5), and elevated triglycerides (OR 1.02, 95% CI=0.9-1.1). Carinderia was the most common food establishment where this population group buy and eat their food out-of-home. Fruits and vegetables were not commonly served while sugar-sweetened beverages were the most popular beverage offered. Based on the findings, the policy recommendation that was formulated was for the LGU to regulate the operation of food establishments like carinderia to offer safe, healthy and affordable foods and in return, the compliant carinderia owners will receive incentives such as discount in permits, food ingredients, utility bills, and others.

Conclusion and Recommendation:
Since eating-out-of home has been increasingly practiced, the LGU should push carinderia owners to offer not just affordable foods but also safe and with healthier food options to their customers.