



International
Labour
Organization

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING WORKPLACE NUTRITION IN CHILE

Healthy food for employees should not be seen as an expense, but as an investment that reduces costs for both the worker and the company. Even though Chile has a relatively young population – with a median age of 32 years – it suffers from a high incidence of chronic diseases related to diet and lifestyle (such as cardiovascular disease, obesity,

diabetes, and hypercholesterolemia). As the population and age of workers increase, so does the incidence of these chronic diseases within Chile's labour force of over 8 million. Making changes now can avert future negative impacts in terms of a burden on the health-care system and reduced worker productivity.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:

Sodexo and Edenred

Beneficiary country:

Chile

Timeframe:

Annual projects from:
2011 – 2012

Budget:

USD 109,677

THE RESPONSE

Workplace health promotion programmes, especially those on nutrition, are part of a comprehensive occupational safety and health policy. In 2005 the results of a global study on good practices in providing food at work were published by the ILO, entitled: *Food at work: Workplace solutions for malnutrition, obesity and chronic diseases*. The study showed that workplace meal programmes providing convenient access to healthy food could help prevent micronutrient deficiencies and chronic diseases, including obesity and diabetes.

In 2011, Sodexo, Edenred and the ILO entered into a partnership to assess Chile's national needs regarding workplace nutrition programmes by sampling a number of enterprises across a variety of economic sectors. The overall objectives were to contribute to healthy lifestyles, improved nutrition and the reduction of nutrition – related non-communicable diseases among workers in Chile. In order to achieve this goal, the project increased the number of enterprises that were aware of good practices in the implementation of workplace nutrition programmes. This was designed to encourage enterprises to adopt adequate nutrition programmes suited to their needs, and eventually to increase the number of companies introducing an adequate workplace nutrition policy.

The project undertook a research exercise utilizing both quantitative and qualitative tools, including 30 in-depth interviews and focus groups with national key informants, government representatives, unions, academia, and enterprise-level employers' and workers' surveys (995 workers from 16 workplaces in different regions and industries). The research assessed the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of target groups, and made a comparison of results from existing workplace nutritional programmes in the various enterprises to identify options to improve current practices and habits.

The project also investigated policies and cultures concerning workplace nutrition programmes at both national and enterprise levels, and drafted recommendations for the promotion and implementation of more comprehensive programmes.



"The 'Food at Work' research was particularly innovative in the sense that it introduced a practical rather than a theoretical analysis of the situation. This result was successful thanks to our close collaboration and allowed us to share know-how, expertise and networks in order to meet common objectives."

Edenred

RESULTS

The project has produced:

- An assessment of the needs of workers and employers regarding workplace nutrition in Chile;
- A comparative analysis of four different nutrition programmes in place in the country, which covered more than 250,000 workers;
- A publication on the challenges and benefits of good workplace nutrition programmes specific to Chile. A panel was convened to discuss the survey upon which this publication was based at the 20th International Congress of Nutrition in Granada, Spain – the most prestigious international event in the nutrition sector, bringing together over 5,000 specialists in this field;
- Recommendations and tailored suggestions for model programmes to address the requirements of different types of enterprises. Recommendations are specifically targeted at employers, workers and unions, the Government, and academia.

Following the close of the project, and based on its results, the Advisory Board on Public Policies for Labour Nutrition was established in November 2013. It is comprised of the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, the *Mutual de Seguridad*, enterprises in the food sector and the University of Alberto Hurtado. Its objective is to promote the right of workers to adequate food at work.

As it currently stands, Chilean legislation regarding food at work is restricted to two main areas: the need for workers to have a comfortable and clean place to eat; and the requirement of a minimum time period for eating. Expanding these requirements to include the consideration of concepts such as a healthy diet would constitute a real step forward. This research, coupled with the subsequent Advisory Board, will support progress in this direction.

To access the publication, please go to: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--americas/---ro-lima/---sro-santiago/documents/publication/wcms_201151.pdf.



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BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

Employers gain from an increased knowledge of various workplace nutrition programmes, which encourage them to develop their own. Once workplace nutrition schemes are in place, both employees and employers will feel the advantages. Workers will have a reduced risk of chronic diet-related illnesses, and as a result employers will benefit from a healthier and more productive workforce.

Large-scale schemes in place at numerous workplaces will result in benefits at the national level – in terms of improved population health.