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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MOHW Launches the National Nutrition Policy**

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In an era marked by increasing rates of chronic diseases and nutritional imbalances, the Ministry of Health & Wellness recognizes the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to nutrition. As a result, the MOHW launched the National Nutrition Policy 2022-2023 today in Belize City.

The document was developed with the commitment and input of stakeholders, including the ministries of Health & Wellness and Education, the Nutrition and Food Security Commission, civil society, non-government organizations, and regional and international organizations. The MOHW received substantial contributions from the European Union, the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the Institute for Nutrition for Central America and Panama.

This policy aims to improve Belize's nutrition approach and to promote healthier lifestyles for Belizeans. The overall goal is to enhance the population's nutritional status by reducing malnutrition, promoting healthy eating habits, and forming a multi-sectoral approach to ensure access to safe and nutritious food. This policy will strengthen Belize's nutrition and food security regulatory and operational framework. Strategies from this policy include creating enabling environments, capacity building, public awareness, and intersectoral collaboration, which the MOHW will integrate into its nutrition activities and plans.

Belize has a population with over 60% prevalence of overweight and 30% obesity, which can lead to an increase in chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. One of this policy's objectives is to increase awareness and promote healthy eating to address malnutrition and to prevent complications secondary to non-communicable diseases.

The Nutrition Unit supports regional and international mandates, such as the Front of Package Warning Label, the Code for Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes, the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, Wellness Week, school feeding programs, and food fortification. Most recently, the government approved a healthy food policy and a ban on sugar-sweetened beverages in schools. These initiatives aim to promote health and wellness.

The intersectoral participation integrated within the policy will ensure that specific strategic lines of action are aligned with national plans and geared towards improving the food and nutrition security of Belize's population. This policy represents a significant milestone in the ministry's commitment to promoting public good.

The implementation of the National Nutrition Policy highlights the commitment of the MOHW to improve health and prevent illness to ensure a healthier population and country.

**Ends**