

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-fifth Session
Ottawa, Canada, 13-17 May 2019

(Prepared by WHO)

Additional information of WHO activities

Alcohol

WHO launched the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018 at the time of UN General Assembly in New York in September 2018. The report provides:

- Data on relevance of reducing the harmful use of alcohol to Sustainable Development Goals 2030
- Currently available global policy and monitoring frameworks, strategies, and action plans
- Detailed information on the consumption of alcohol in populations, the health consequences of alcohol consumption and policy responses at global and regional levels and groups of countries with different income levels
- Trends in alcohol consumption and alcohol-related mortality and morbidity according to indicators included in the global monitoring frameworks
- Country profiles of the WHO Member States

The information presented in the report also address the labelling of alcoholic beverages. Countries most frequently report the requirement that alcoholic beverage labels should disclose the alcohol content (i.e. percentage of pure alcohol) of the beverage. This information is required for beer in 122 responding countries, for wine in 119 countries, and for spirits in 120 countries. High-income (85%) and low-income countries (80%) were more likely to report requiring labelling the alcohol content than middle-income countries (65–70%, depending on the beverage type).

Of the 164 responding countries, less than a third (47) mandated health and safety warning labels on bottles or containers.

- Of the 65 responding countries requiring either warning labels on advertisements for alcohol and/or on alcohol bottles or containers
- 23 have a legal requirement regarding the size of the warning label
- Warning labels often focus on underage drinking (41 countries) or drink–driving (31 countries)
- Only seven countries require rotation of the warning label text.

WHO has also introduced in September 2018 a new alcohol control initiative called “SAFER”, to prevent and reduce alcohol-related deaths and disability. This WHO-led initiative aims to support global target of reducing harmful use of alcohol by 10% by 2025. The initiative outlines five high-impact strategies that can help governments reduce the harmful use of alcohol and related health, social and economic consequences;

- Strengthen restrictions on alcohol availability.
- Advance and enforce drink driving countermeasures.
- Facilitate access to screening, brief interventions, and treatment.
- Enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion.
- Raise prices on alcohol through excise taxes and pricing policies.

The SAFER initiative includes three interlinked components to support country implementation:

- a WHO action package of effective alcohol policy and programme interventions
- a WHO/UN-led programme focusing on country action; and
- a multi-stakeholder communications and advocacy campaign.