



Food Trade and Nutrition: The role of nutritional labelling

Intersessional Event of the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP)

Monday, 26 May 2025 | 12:15-13:45 CEST

Hybrid event

Sheikh Zayed Centre, FAO headquarters and Virtual conferencing platform Zoom

Background

Trade plays a key role in our food systems, significantly shaping dietary patterns and nutritional outcomes by influencing food availability and affordability, and diet composition. While trade enhances food diversity and improves nutrient adequacy, it can also, in some contexts, contribute to increased consumption of foods high in fats, sugars and salt, potentially leading to negative health effects.

The 2024 edition of the FAO flagship report, [The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets \(SOCO\)](#), examines the relationship between food trade and nutrition. It explores how trade policies intersect with nutrition measures, offering policymakers valuable insights on integrating nutrition objectives into trade agreements and responding to the evolving dynamics of global food systems.

Given the significant influence of trade on food availability, consumer choices and diet composition, policy interventions are necessary to reduce health risks and improve public well-being. Governments can implement policy measures, such as taxes or agricultural subsidies that can have an impact on the diets of consumers.

Labelling, as a policy measure, provides consumers with clear and accurate information on the nutritional content of food products. In recent years, global interest in nutrition labelling has grown, as governments are increasingly using it as a policy tool to guide consumers toward informed food choices and healthier diets. This rising attention is driven by the increasing prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions, which pose major public health and economic challenges. Furthermore, harmonization of nutritional labelling regulations across countries would significantly facilitate international trade.

Labelling can include mandatory nutritional specifications – requiring pre-packaged foods to provide information on defined nutrients – and supplementary nutrition information. This can take the form of front-of-pack labels that provide simplified guidance or health warnings to assist consumers in the assessment of the healthiness of their food choices.

Nutritional labelling plays an important role in promoting public health and informed decision-making. By providing clear and accessible information, it empowers consumers to make dietary choices that align with their nutritional needs. Additionally, mandatory labelling incentivizes food manufacturers to revise the nutritional quality of their products. Nutritional labelling, along with policies such as taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and tariff reductions on fruits and vegetables, contribute to improving public health outcomes.

Objective

The event aims to foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring that trade policies, especially nutritional labelling, can contribute effectively to improving nutritional outcomes. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the impact of labelling as a measure to promote healthier dietary choices and improve public health outcomes. They will also discuss how this can be compatible with trade policies and regulations to support achieving the food security and nutrition objectives. This event will convene policymakers, public health experts, trade representatives and consumer advocacy groups to discuss best practices and strategies for effective nutrition labelling. A diverse panel of speakers from different regions will share their experiences in implementing regulations. In addition, the event will be an opportunity to highlight the role of FAO and other international organizations in supporting evidence-based decision-making and providing guidance on labelling policies.

Date and venue

The event will be held on 26 May 2025. It will be organized in a hybrid mode to allow a broad participation, especially from capitals. The in-person meeting will be held in the Sheikh Zayed Centre at FAO headquarters.

Participants

The event is primarily aimed at Permanent Representations to FAO and government officials from capitals.

* A light lunch will be served after the event