Beyond food safety: effective labelling for **healthier food** in the context of Codex guidance

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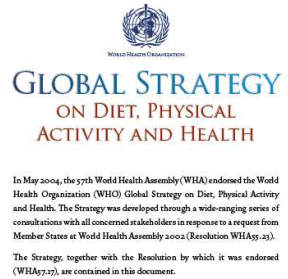
World Health Organization

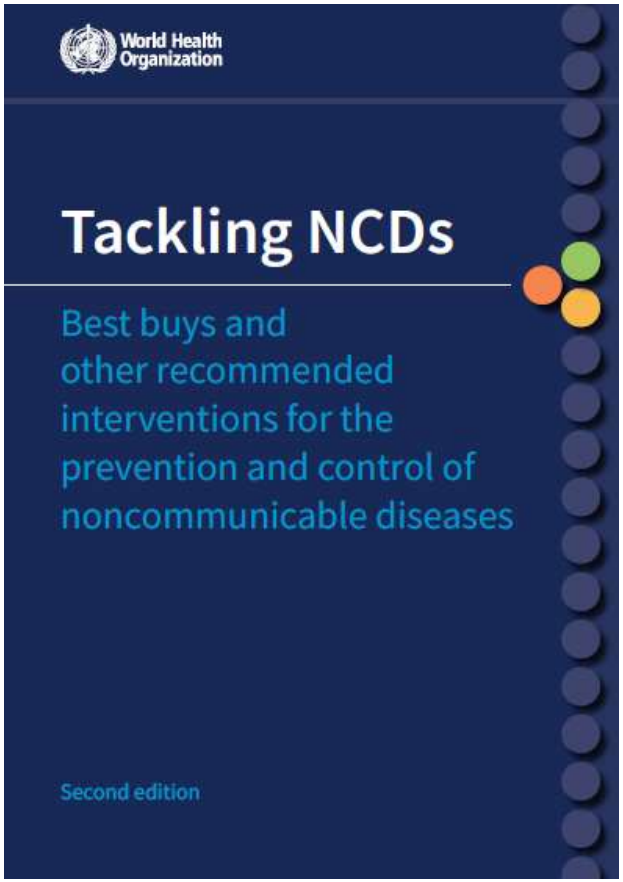
WHO Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health (2004)



Nutrition labelling is an important means to meet consumers' requirement for: "*accurate, standardized and comprehensible information on the content of food items* ***in order to make healthy choices***".

Link to Codex:

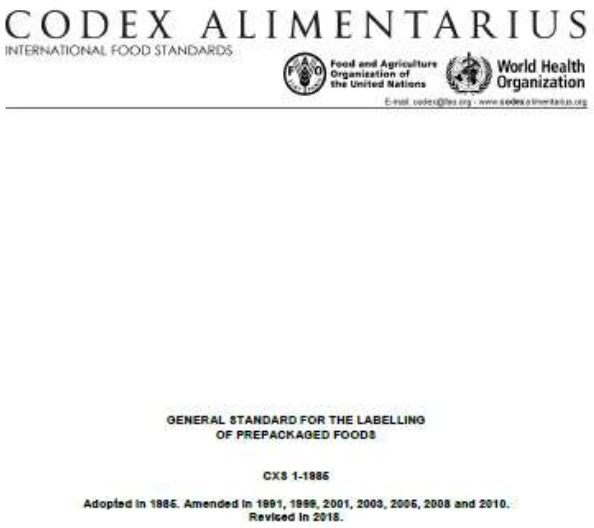
- **WHA56.23** urged Member States to make full use of Codex Alimentarius Commission standards for **the protection of human health** throughout the food chain.
- **WHA57.17** requests the Codex Alimentarius Commission to continue to give full consideration, within the framework of its operational mandate, to evidence-based action it might take **to improve the health standards of foods, consistent with the aims and objectives of the Strategy.**
- **Paragraph 59 of the Global Strategy states**: Public health efforts may be strengthened by the use of international norms and standards particularly those drawn up by the Codex (-> updates to listing of nutrients and NRVs-NCD)



Number	Intervention
H1	Reformulation policies for healthier food and beverage products (e.g. elimination of *trans*-fatty acids and/or reduction of saturated fats, free sugars and/or sodium)
H2	Front-of-pack labelling as part of comprehensive nutrition labelling policies for facilitating consumers' understanding and choice of food for healthy diets
H3	Public food procurement and service policies for healthy diets (e.g. to reduce the intake of free sugars, sodium, unhealthy fats, and to increase the consumption of legumes, wholegrains, fruits and vegetables)
H4	Behavioural change communication and mass media campaigns for healthy diets (e.g. to reduce the intake of energy, free sugars, sodium, unhealthy fats, and to increase the consumption of legumes, wholegrains, fruits and vegetables)
H5	Policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing on diet
H6	Protection, promotion and support of optimal breastfeeding practices (*see page 7*)
H7	Taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) as part of comprehensive fiscal policies to promote healthy diets (*see page 10*)

technical-brief-unhealthy-diet.pdf (who.int)

Methods for WHO CHOICE: Health Financing and Economics (who.int)


CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Health Organization

GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS

CXS 1-1985

Adopted in 1985. Amended in 1991, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2010. Revised in 2018.

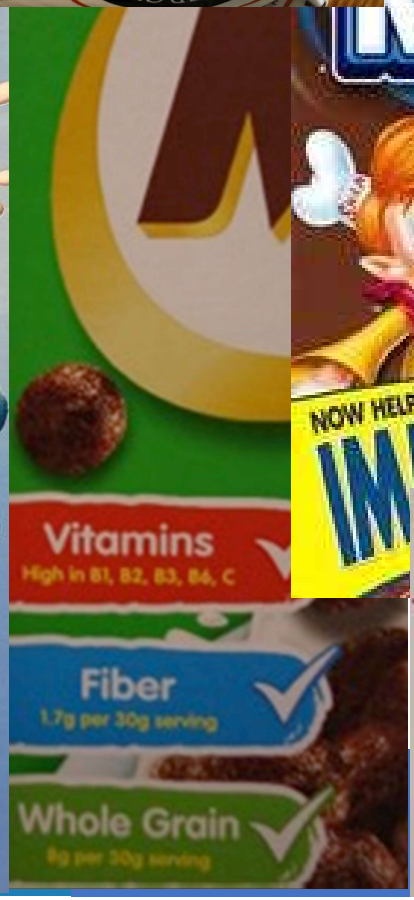
Prepackaged food shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling in a manner that is **false**, **misleading** or **deceptive** or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character in any respect.


Nutrition Power for Kids
Fruity Cheerios
2 BOX TOPS
FROOT LOOPS
FREE!
FROSTIES
COCOA PEBBLES
STARS
MILO
COOKIE CRISP


PROD.DATE:15/10/2018
EXP.DATE:15/12/2019
LOT:151018/07-03 23:39
Granola bars
honey & almond
-20% SUGAR
VITALIA
Health Food
With superfood
High in fiber
Low in salt
50% wholegrain oat flakes
free from lactose
free from palm oil
CRUNCHY • TASTY • LONG LASTING ENERGY


Kellogg's
COCOA KRISPIES
NOW HELPS SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S IMMUNITY


OTEES
ORIGINALS
BUBBLEGUM FLAVOURED
MULTIGRAIN CEREAL
WITH MARSHMALLOWS
MULTI GRAIN
MADE WITH OATS, MAIZE & RICE
WHEAT FREE
HIGH IN 6 VITAMINS
SOURCE OF 3 MINERALS
375 g


Vitamins
High in B1, B2, B3, B6, C
Fiber
1.7g per 30g serving
Whole Grain
8g per 30g serving


Heinz
Little Kids
1-3 years
fruit & veg
SHREDZ
berries apple & veg
99% fruit and veg

McVitie's
JUNIOR
Chocolate!
SPONGEBOB
Milk Chocolate Biscuits
NEW
Biscuits with chocolate flavoured filling
Digestive
Wholemeal Goodness

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Health Organization

E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS

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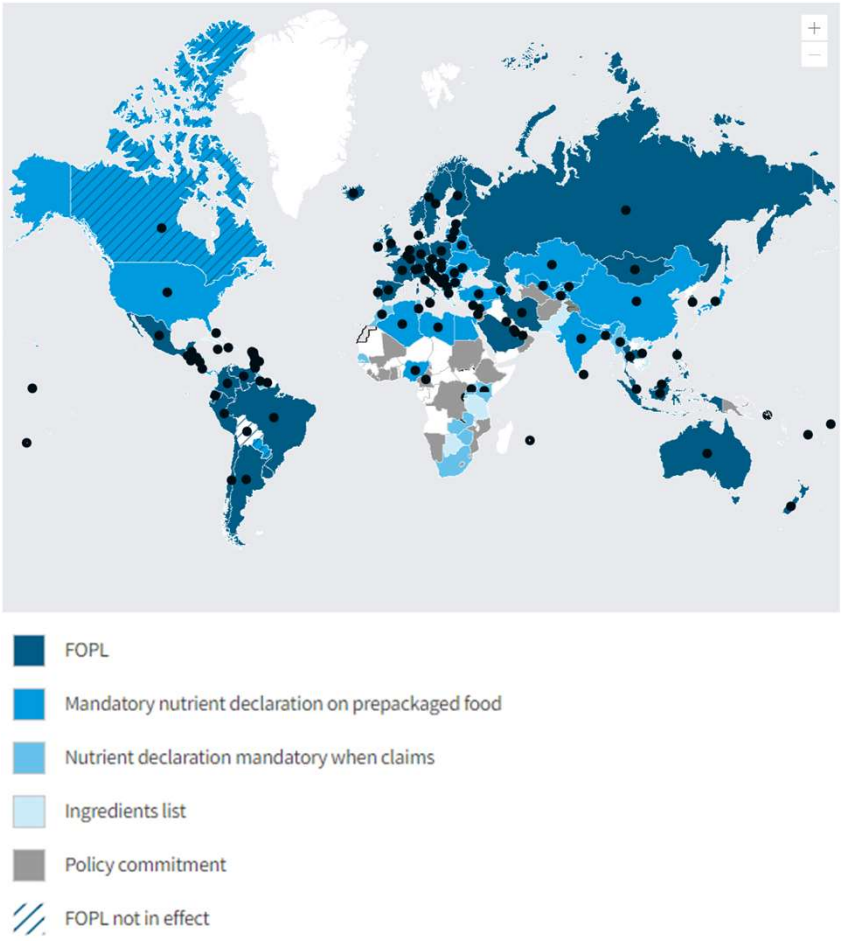
Revised in 2018.

World Health Organization

Labelling policies

- **Lists of ingredients**: 135 MS
- Mandatory **declaration of nutrients** on all prepackaged food : 100 MS (only when nutrient content claims: 28 MS).
- Regulate the use of **nutrition and health claims**: 115 MS
- **FOPL**: 43 MS
  - Mandatory measures: 11
  - Voluntary measures: 28
  - Both mandatory and voluntary measures: 4



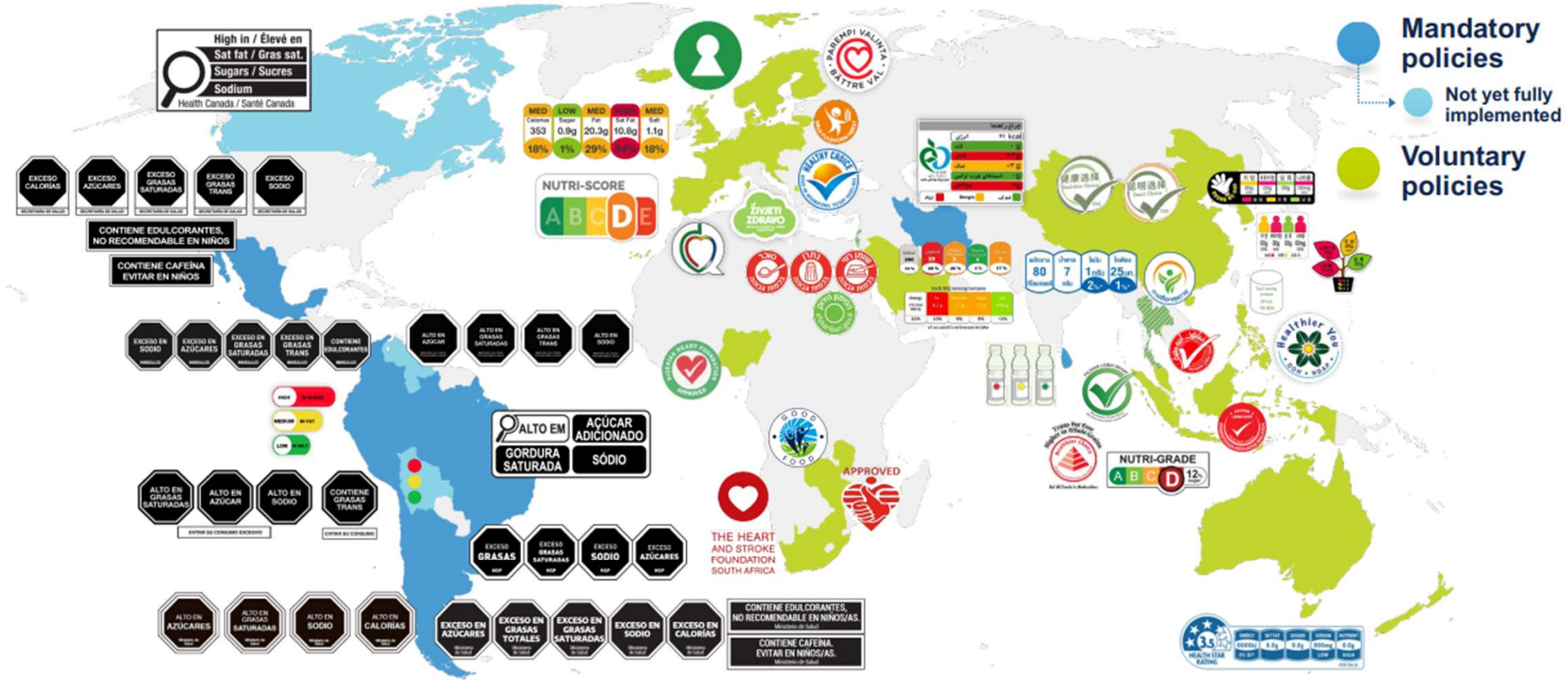
https://gifna.who.int/summary/NutritionLabelling
Accessed : September 2024

MS: WHO Member States
FOPL: Front of pack labelling

World Health Organization

Front-of-package labels around the world

Global Food Research Program
UNC-Chapel Hill



GLOBAL FOOD RESEARCH PROGRAM at UNC-CHAPEL HILL

In scope:
Nutrition labelling policies, including those regulating the use of the **list of ingredients, nutrient declarations, FOPL, and nutrition and health claims**

Information on the development of the WHO guideline on nutrition labelling policies
(Public consultation event) ->

World Health Organization

Commissioned literature reviews to inform WHO guidelines

ANNUAL REVIEWS

Annual Review of Nutrition

The Potential Effectiveness of Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labeling for Improving Population Diets

Bridget Kelly,[1] See Hoe Ng,[1] Amy Carrad,[1] and Simone Pettigrew[2]

[1]Early Start, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia; email: bkelly@uow.edu.au

[2]The George Institute for Global Health, University of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

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OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

food, beverage, label, front-of-pack, diet, health

Abstract

Nutrition labeling on the front of food packages can support more healthful purchase decisions and encourage favorable reformulation. This systematic literature review applied Cochrane methods to synthesize and appraise the evidence on the effectiveness of front-of-pack labeling (FOPL) on diet-related outcomes and food reformulation to inform policy recommendations. The search was conducted on 11 academic and gray literature databases, from inception to July 2022. Evidence was synthesized using GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation), vote counting, and meta-analyses, where appropriate. Overall, 221 articles were included in the review. The randomized controlled trial evidence suggested that, compared with when no FOPL was present, FOPL likely improved consumer understanding of the nutritional quality/content of foods (moderate certainty of evidence), and the healthfulness of food choices (moderate certainty) and purchases (moderate certainty). Interpretive FOPL had a greater effect on these outcomes compared with noninterpretive systems (moderate certainty). There was inconsistency in the best-performing interpretive FOPL system.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

Annual Review of Nutrition

The Potential Effectiveness of Nutrient Declarations and Nutrition and Health Claims for Improving Population Diets

Bridget Kelly,[1] See Hoe Ng,[1] Amy Carrad,[1] and Simone Pettigrew[2]

[1]Early Start, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia; email: bkelly@uow.edu.au

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Abstract

Nutrition labeling supports healthier diets by aiding purchase decisions and stimulating reformulation. This systematic literature review applied Cochrane methods to synthesize and appraise evidence on the effectiveness of nutrient declarations and nutrition and health claims on diet-related outcomes. The search spanned 11 academic databases, from inception to July 2022. Evidence was synthesized using GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation) and vote counting. Data were available from 170 studies. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) suggest that nutrient declarations likely improved consumer understanding of the nutritional quality/content of foods (moderate certainty) and may have improved the healthfulness of choices (low certainty) versus no label. RCT evidence also suggests that claims likely increased consumer perceptions of food healthfulness and increased choice and purchases of labeled foods (both moderate certainty), irrespective of nutritional quality. To improve label understanding and avoid misinterpretation, nutrient declarations may incorporate interpretive elements and claims can apply disqualifying conditions for their usage, on the basis of overall nutritional quality.

DRAFT

Nutrition labelling policies: WHO guideline

Two good practice statements

Three (strong) recommendations

Good-practice statement on the list of ingredients

WHO recommends the inclusion of a list of ingredients on prepackaged food, consistent with the Codex Alimentarius *General standard for the labelling of prepackaged foods*

Remarks (selected)

- To address nutrition-related public health priorities, countries may need to examine whether the required declarations in the list of ingredients provide sufficient detail to inform consumers and support implementation of other food policies in line with domestic laws or dietary guidance. For example, mandating the specification of partially hydrogenated oils as an ingredient and prohibiting their grouping under the nonspecific "hydrogenated oils" can support a national strategy to eliminate industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids from the food supply.

Good-practice statement on the use of nutrition and health claims

WHO recommends protecting consumers from false, misleading and/or deceptive nutrition and health claims on food, through regulation of the use of nutrition and health claims.

Remarks (selected)

- To reduce the potential negative impact of nutrition and health claims on consumer understanding, food choice, food purchase and diets, policies to regulate such claims should:
  - […] set conditions on the use of nutrition and health claims, including through the use of nutrient profile models,
  - […] align with and support national nutrition, health and consumer protection policies, including other nutrition labelling policies.

WHO Recommendation on nutrient declarations

WHO recommends a policy to implement a nutrient declaration (Strong recommendation)

Remarks (selected)

- The Codex Alimentarius *Guidelines on nutrition labelling (1)* recognize the need for declaration of any other nutrient considered to be relevant for maintaining a good nutritional status. Countries should determine whether the proposed nutrient declaration provides information required by domestic laws and information relevant to national dietary guidelines. For example, some countries have implemented mandatory nutrient declarations for nutrients other than those proposed to be mandatory in the Codex Alimentarius *Guidelines on nutrition labelling (1)*, such as *trans*-fatty acids, added sugars, dietary fibre, and certain vitamins and minerals.

WHO Recommendations on front-of-pack labelling

1. WHO recommends a policy to implement FOPL.
   (Strong recommendation)
2. WHO recommends implementation of interpretive FOPL in preference to non-interpretive FOPL.
   (Strong recommendation)

Recommended FOPL systems ?

Examples of most effective FOPL systems

For most outcomes, other interpretive FOPL performed better than endorsement logos

Least effective across outcomes

FOPL system type	Examples
Interpretive FOPL system	
Summary indicator systems	
Nutrient-specific (traffic-light label)	
Negative nutrient-specific (warning label)	
Endorsement logos	
Non-interpretive FOPL systems	
Nutrient-specific systems	

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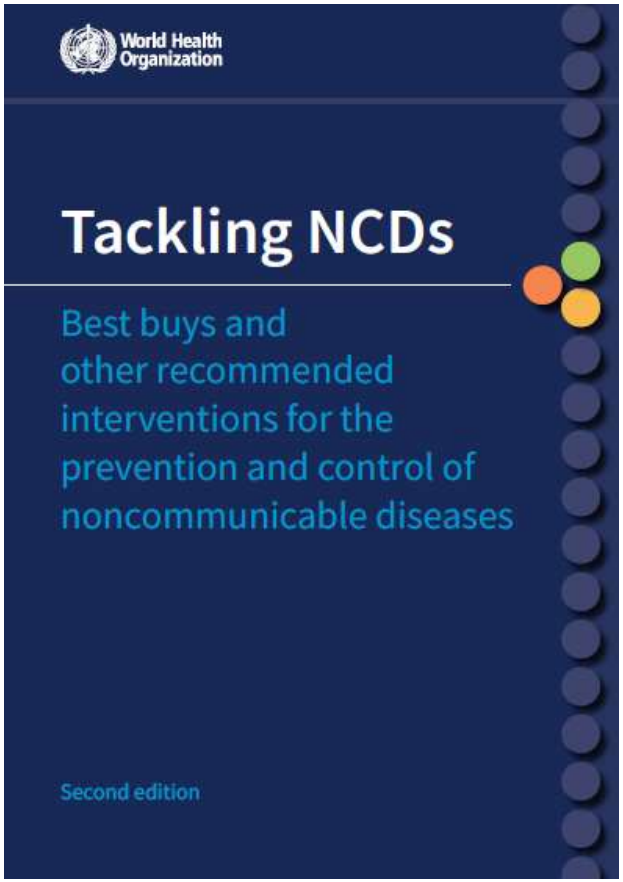


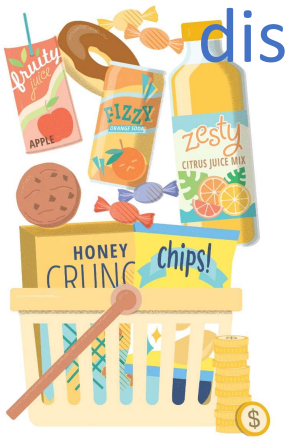
Classifying foods to regulate to tackle NCDs

Classifying foods to regulate?

Foods to limit, restrict, regulate, disincentivize

Bringing the **population's intake closer to nutrient intake goals**

Foods to promote, encourage, incentivize



WHO recognizes the urgent need to curb the global dietary shift towards ultra-processed food that is driving negative health outcomes

A large and growing body of evidence suggests that consumption of highly processed foods described as "ultra-processed" foods (UPF) by the NOVA classification scheme (NOVA classification group 4) *(23)* is associated with negative health outcomes. These include risk of premature mortality, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, overweight, obesity and type 2 diabetes, as well as impaired mental, respiratory and gastrointestinal health *(24)*. The term UPF refers to a wide range of foods and beverages with a variety of characteristics.

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Considerations for thresholds and food categories to be regulated

Nutrient-based dietary guidelines

	WHO recommendation	Contribution to a ***2000kcal/day*** diet	Amount in grams (for a 2000kcal diet)
Total fat (9kcal/g)	≤30 % of total daily kcal	600 kcal	66.5g
Saturated fat (9kcal/g)	≤10 % of total daily kcal	200 kcal	22g
Trans-fat (9kcal/g)	≤1 % of total daily kcal	20kcal	2.2g
Free sugars (4kcal/g)*	<10 % of total daily kcal	200 kcal	50g
Sodium	<2000mg/day	2000 mg	2000mg
Non sugar sweetener (NSS)	Not recommended		

* < 5% of total daily energy for additional health benefits

Food-based dietary guidelines

https://www.fao.org/nutrition/nutrition-education/food-dietary-guidelines/en/

Proposing a global approach to classifying foods to regulate

- Rational: Proliferation of nutrient profile models, and incoherence and inconsistency across approaches and settings, increased "negotiation" of thresholds, diminished credibility
- Need to strengthen the **public health rational** and increase consistency in messaging
- Mitigate regulatory confusion
- Focus:
  - Reduce *demand and supply* of **health-harming foods**
    - high in **total fats, saturated fats, *trans-fatty* acids free sugars, sodium**
    - **"ultra processed foods"**
  - Classification applicable to multiple policy purposes: marketing restrictions, front of pack (warning) labels, procurement policies, fiscal policies
  - Note: *benchmarks* proposed for reformulation

Forthcoming (early 2025)

Thank you

World Health Organization

World Health Organization