

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Front of Pack Labeling in Mexico

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Report Highlights:

This report reiterates Mexico's guidelines for front-of-the-pack labeling on prepackaged, processed foods, and non-alcoholic beverages. The guidelines were issued by the Federal Commission for the Protection Against Sanitary Risk on April 15, 2014. As of April 2019, these guidelines have not changed. The Mexican Senate introduced a new bill to transition to stop signs on labels that inform consumers of "unhealthy" products similar to the system in Chile. However, on May 8th, the Mexican Supreme Court rejected the bill on modifying the labeling for foods and non-alcoholic beverages, considering that the current labeling guidelines do not violate health and feeding rights of Mexican consumers.

General Information:

Domestic and imported prepackaged, processed foods and non-alcoholic beverages in Mexico are subject to a front-of-the-pack (FOP) labeling requirement. This report also includes information about allowed and prohibited labeling claims.

Background

On April 15, 2014, the Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS) announced, through the Federal Register ([Diario Oficial](#)), new guidelines for the labeling of prepackaged, processed foods and non-alcoholic beverages. The guidelines made it mandatory to include a FOP label with nutritional information such as the amount of sugar, sodium, fats, and caloric content per portion.

Prior to the new regulation, the nutritional information appeared on the side or back panel of the product making the information unclear for consumers as several measurements appeared on the label. Further, the previous measurements referred to the whole pack rather than a portion.

The intention of FOP labeling is to inform consumers if the product in question is high or low in nutrients so that they may assess if it is appropriate for their diet. FOP labeling references a diet of 2,000 calories, similar to that of the United States. The nutritional icons show saturated fats, other fats, and total sugar. They also report calories and allow consumers to compare the same parameters across products. Further, under the regulations, prepackaged, processed foods, and non-alcoholic beverages cannot be presented in a false or misleading manner.

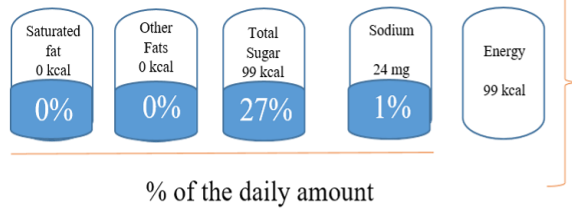
A potential game changer

On March 14th, 2019, a bill was presented in the Mexican Senate proposing a change to nutritional FOP labeling. The bill suggests using stop signs instead of the nutritional icons. The proposal is based on recommendations made by the Instituto Nacional de Salud (Mexico National Health Institute) and the Panamerican Health Organization. Chile has already successfully implemented these stop signs, using octagonal black labels, printed with the words “alto en” (high in) to inform consumers of the fat, sodium, calories, and sugar content in foods. The stop signs are easy to read, with a goal of helping consumers in their consumption choices.¹ On May 8th, the Mexican Supreme Court rejected the bill on modifying the labeling for foods and non-alcoholic beverages, considering that the current labeling does not violate health and feeding rights of the Mexican consumers.

FOP labeling for individual size packaging

FOP labeling for individual packs has five nutritional information icons depicted below:

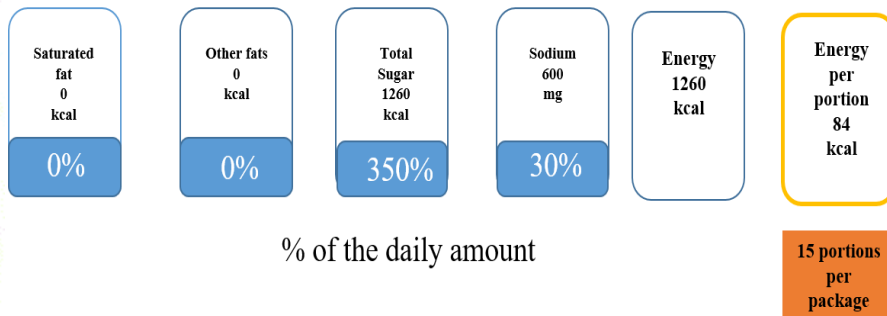
¹ Source: Agronoticias – March 14th, 2019 – Presentan Iniciativa de Etiquetado Entendible
<https://agronoticias.com.mx/2019/03/13/presentan-iniciativa-de-etiquetado-entendible-en-productos-procesados/>



The fifth icon represents the total energy of the package.

The first four icons exhibit the maximum consumption of nutrients where 100% is the limit.

FOP labeling for family size packaging



The fifth icon represents the total energy of each portion

The sixth icon represents the total energy per pack and number of portions

It is important to clarify that the label does not replace the nutritional information table, which should be included on the back or on the side of the pack.

The following products are exempt of FOP labeling:

- One ingredient products
- Herbs, spices, or herb mixes
- Coffee extracts, whole coffee grains, ground coffee (whether or not it is decaffeinated)

- Herbal infusions, tea (whether or not it is decaffeinated), instant tea, or soluble tea that does not have added ingredients
- Fermented vinegar or substitutes for vinegar
- Bottled still water, bottled mineral/sparkling water
- Products with surface space below 78 square centimeters (for these products, companies must include a phone number or a website where the consumer can get the nutritional information)

In these cases, the products should not declare any misleading qualities on its label or advertising.

Quality Statements

In Mexico, quality statements regarding the properties of processed foods and non-alcoholic beverages applies for both labels and advertising. Specifically, the label shall not describe or present a quality or property of a product in a false or misleading manner.

The following labeling claims cannot be included on labeling and advertising for prepackaged foods and non-alcoholic beverages.

Claims that a balanced diet cannot provide a sufficient amount of nutrients without the product being sold

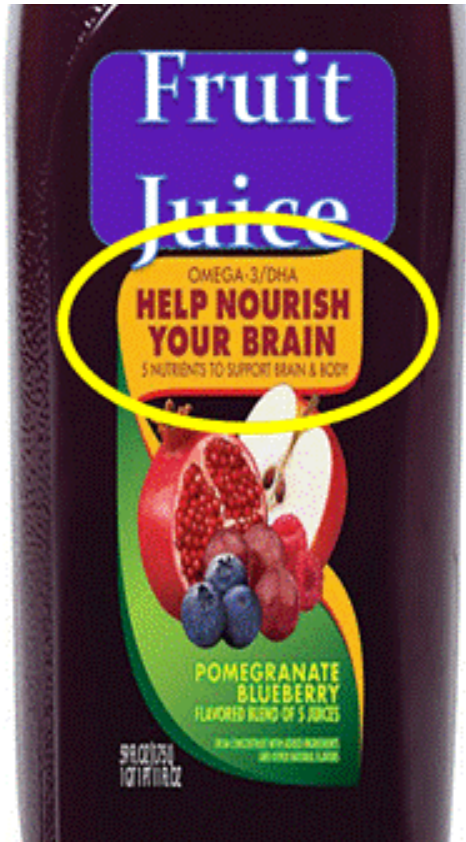
- Claims that cannot be verified
- Claims about the usefulness of a product to prevent, alleviate, treat or cure a disease, or a physiological disorder
- Claims that may raise doubts about the safety of similar prepackage foods or non-alcoholic beverages, or which may cause fear to the consumer
- Claims affirming that a certain food constitutes an adequate source of all essential nutrients
- The use of superlatives or comparatives
- Property claims regarding good practices of hygiene or commerce, such as “genuine,” “healthiness,” “health,” “healthy,” except those indicated in other applicable legal systems

The following labeling claims are allowed:

- If the product has acquired a special or higher nutritional value thanks to the addition of inorganic nutrients (minerals) and amino acids (only if said that the addition was based on nutritional considerations of compliance with the applicable legal framework)
- If the product has special nutritional qualities thanks to the reduction or omission of a nutrient, based on nutritional considerations and subject to the applicable legal framework
- Terms such as “natural,” “pure,” “fresh,” “homemade,” “organically grown,” must comply with the applicable legal framework
- Food preparations that require a ritual or religious preparation (i.e. Halal, Kosher) as long as they

meet the requirements of the religious authorities or the competent ritual

- Property statements that affirm that the product has special characteristics compared to the same products of its type
- If there is an absence or non-addition of one or more nutrients (i.e. lactose free, gluten free) that are considered relevant for the product, it must be declared in the nutritional statement according to the applicable legal frame



In this picture: Example of a misleading labeling claim. Labeling claim (marked in yellow) creating a statement that the product will nourish brain and body with the intake of the product



In this picture: Example of a correct labeling claim. Labeling claim (marked in brown, text in Spanish) creating a statement that the product is added with Iron and Vitamins A and D.

Nutritional and healthy labeling claims

The nutritional and healthy labeling claims refer to the caloric content, proteins, carbohydrates, fats and other fats, dietetic fiber, sodium, vitamins and minerals established on the reference nutritional values as a percentage of the daily-recommended intake.

Labeling claims that can be included: Nutritional properties that describe the level or a particular nutrient in the product, i.e. “source of calcium”

- Property claims that compare the level of nutrients and/or the energy value of two or more nutrients, i.e. “reduced in sugar”
- Health property claims that declare; suggest or imply that there is a relationship between a food or its component and health
- Nutritional claims that describe the physiological function of the nutrient in the growth, development and normal functions of the organism, i.e. “Salmon is a good source of Omega 3”
- Specific benefits and effects on the consumption of certain foods or their components in the context of a diet in normal functions or biological activities of the organism, i.e. “Food X has Y grams of substance W”



In this picture: An example of the nutritional claims on label (i.e. with probiotics, non-fat yogurt).

Cautionary information

Cautionary information refers to an ingredient or ingredients that can cause real or potential health risks like digestive intolerance, allergies, metabolic disease or toxicity. In order to add cautionary information into the label, this information must have scientific proof.

For further information and to learn more about the services provided by the Agricultural Trade Offices (ATO) in Mexico, please contact us at:

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