Factors driving warning labels over other FoP labels in Canada

Mary R. L’Abbé, CM, PhD
Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences
Director, WHO Collaborating Centre on Nutrition Policy for NCD Prevention

CSE India Webinar on Front-of-Pack Labelling
March 4, 2021
FOPL can be an effective strategy to promote healthy diets

“Effective nutrition labelling, including simple-to-use FOPL, has been identified as one of the strategies that countries should use to address the growing global concern of unhealthy dietary patterns.”

Key guiding principles for FOPL system

1. Nutrient selections
   - Nutrients-to-limit
   - Nutrients-to-encourage
   - Single vs. multiple nutrient(s)

2. Reference values
   - Serving sizes or per 100 g
   - Thresholds

3. Design
   - Easy-to-understand
   - Interpretive

4. Consistency (i.e., single system)
   - Mandatory vs. voluntary
FOPL policies have been implemented or announced in many countries

### National FOPL policies by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implemented FOPL</th>
<th>Announced FOPL</th>
<th>Voluntary government-led FOPL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Brazil</td>
<td>• Antigua</td>
<td>• Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chile</td>
<td>• Argentina</td>
<td>• Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ecuador</td>
<td>• Bahamas</td>
<td>• Brunei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finland</td>
<td>• Barbados</td>
<td>• Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indonesia</td>
<td>• Belize</td>
<td>• The Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Iran</td>
<td>• Canada</td>
<td>• Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Israel</td>
<td>• Columbia</td>
<td>• France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mexico</td>
<td>• Dominica</td>
<td>• Iceland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peru</td>
<td>• The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>• Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sri Lanka</td>
<td>• Germany</td>
<td>• Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thailand</td>
<td>• Grenada</td>
<td>• The Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thailand</td>
<td>• Guyana</td>
<td>• New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uruguay</td>
<td>• Haiti</td>
<td>• Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• India</td>
<td>• Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Italy</td>
<td>• The Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jamaica</td>
<td>• Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Montserrat</td>
<td>• Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• St. Kitts</td>
<td>• Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• St. Lucia</td>
<td>• South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• St. Vincent</td>
<td>• Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suriname</td>
<td>• Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trinidad</td>
<td>• The United Kingdom (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of various FOPL systems

#### Nutrient-specific, non-interpretive
- (Mexico)
- (Italy)

#### Nutrient-specific, interpretive
- (Chile)
- (Israel)
- (Finland)
- (Canada)
- (Ecuador)

#### Summative, interpretive
- (Denmark)
- (Belgium)
- (Thailand)
- (Australia)
- (France)
- (India)
Most foods are high in sugars, sodium and/or saturated fats

From Healthy Eating Strategy Infographic, Health Canada
HEALTHY EATING STRATEGY: Suite of policies aimed at “making the healthier choice the easier choice”
...• Promote healthy eating, including continuing work to introduce new restrictions on the commercial marketing of food and beverages to children and establishing new front-of-package labelling
Health Canada proposed implementation of mandatory ‘High-in’ Warning Labels

- First introduced as part of the *Healthy Eating Strategy* in 2016¹.

**Current proposal²:**
- Nutrient-specific, interpretive system
  - Saturated fat
  - Sugars (total)
  - Sodium
- Mandatory ‘High-in’ warning label (WL)
- Placed on pre-packaged foods & beverages that *meet or exceed* threshold levels.
- Proposed to come in force in **December 2022**.

**Current status:**
- Identified in the 2019 Minister of Health Mandate Letter by the PM³
- *Canada Gazette Part II* expected to be released in **Fall 2021**⁴.

---

FOPL can operate through 2 pathways

1. Reformulation

Chile
- Mandatory ‘High-in’ WLs
- Decreased proportion of products with any WLs post-policy (51% in 2014 vs. 44% in 2017)¹

New Zealand
- Voluntary Health Star Ratings (HSR)
- 83% of products with HSR went through reformulations³.

Canada
- As of 2017, 63.5% of prepackaged foods and beverages would carry at least 1 WL (28.6% saturated fat, 26.6% sugars, 31.4% sodium)⁴.

Proportion of Products in FLIP 2013: That would require a FOP Symbol

67.1% with ≥1 FOP

Based on CGI (2018) published criteria

Christoforou et al 2018, unpublished
FOPL can operate through 2 pathways

2. FOPL can change consumer behaviour

1) Help select healthier foods\(^1,2\)
   • Easily & quickly determine ‘healthfulness’ of foods.
   • Avoid ‘less healthy’ foods\(^1-3\).
   • Decreased sale of high-in beverage purchases\(^3\).

2) Improve nutrient intake\(^3\)
   • Decrease in energy, fat, saturated fat, and salt intake.
   • Increase in fibre and vegetable intake.

---

FRONT-OF-PACKAGE (FOP) LABELLING

Will help consumers quickly and easily identify foods high in sugars, sodium or saturated fat

Toward Front-of-Package Nutrition Labels for Canadians

Consultation Document

Canada Gazette, Part I - February 10, 2018
Cognitive Skills required to use Nutrition Information

Increased ability of consumers required to interpret information

Simplification, easy to understand and use

Adapted from Roodenburg, Proc Nutr Soc. 2017
Moving to ‘Interpretative’ Labelling, rather than just Informational

Fact Based

Interpretive

Nutrition Facts
Valeur nutritive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per 2/3 cup (30 g)</th>
<th>% Daily Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat / Lipides</td>
<td>2 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated / saturés</td>
<td>0 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans / trans</td>
<td>0 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol / Cholesterol</td>
<td>0 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium / Sodium</td>
<td>105 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate / Glucides</td>
<td>24 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre / Fibres</td>
<td>2 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars / Sucres</td>
<td>6 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein / Protéines</td>
<td>2 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A / Vitamine A</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C / Vitamine C</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium / Calcium</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron / Fer</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each 2/3 cup serving provides:

- Calories: 120
- Fat: 2 g (3%)
- Saturated Fat: 0 g (0%)
- Sodium: 105 mg (4%)
- Sugar: 6 g (8%)

of an adult’s percent daily value

Ecuador, 2014

UK, 2013

Canada, CG1 (2018)
Regulated
Mandatory
FOP

Loblaw’s, 2012

Chile, 2015

Australia/NZ
2014 - voluntary
5 years
Nearly 50% of Canadian foods carry NCC; ~20% have FOP symbols; → All promote positive attributes of the food.

Adapted from: Franco-Arellano et al, BMC Nutrition, 2017 [FLIP 2013 data]
Halo effect - Foods with “positive” FOP symbols are perceived as healthier

Halo effect - Foods with claims perceived as healthier and increase purchase intentions

Mean ± SEM; n= 506

Consumers With Lower Health Literacy

- Perceived Healthiness increases
- Less able to discriminate between products
- All products rated ‘healthier’


n=1,997 Canadians
(Nationally representative)
What would be the potential impact of avoiding foods with red traffic lights on the label on the nutrient intakes of Canadian adults?

A modelling study using the UK Traffic Light system for front-of-pack labelling

Emrich et al., PLoS ONE (2017)
Mean energy and nutrient intake under the traffic light scenario compared with the intakes as measured (baseline)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Energy ± SE (kcal/d)</th>
<th>Total fat ± SE (g/d)</th>
<th>Saturated fat ± SE (g/d)</th>
<th>Sodium ± SE (mg/d)</th>
<th>Sugar ± SE (g/d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labelling Daily Value</strong></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>2065 ± 14</td>
<td>75 ± 1</td>
<td>25 ± 0</td>
<td>3084 ± 27</td>
<td>102 ± 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic light scenario</td>
<td>1959 ± 13</td>
<td>65 ± 1</td>
<td>21 ± 0</td>
<td>2902 ± 26</td>
<td>101 ± 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men (19+)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>2383 ± 22</td>
<td>87 ± 1</td>
<td>28 ± 0</td>
<td>3533 ± 46</td>
<td>114 ± 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic light scenario</td>
<td>2260 ± 21</td>
<td>75 ± 1</td>
<td>24 ± 0</td>
<td>3334 ± 45</td>
<td>111 ± 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women (19+)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>1750 ± 15</td>
<td>64 ± 1</td>
<td>21 ± 0</td>
<td>2636 ± 29</td>
<td>91 ± 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic light scenario</td>
<td>1660 ± 14</td>
<td>55 ± 1</td>
<td>18 ± 0</td>
<td>2472 ± 27</td>
<td>91 ± 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intake under the Traffic light scenario significantly lower than baseline intake (p<0.01)
Canada’s proposed FOP Labelling  
(Canada Gazette Part I - Feb10, 2018)

A FRONT-OF-PACKAGE nutrition symbol will help Canadians *quickly and easily identify foods high in sugars, sodium or saturated fat*

- Encourages industry reformulation
- Reduces sales of ‘unhealthy’ products
- Changes social norms
Thank You! - Questions

Funding Support

Acknowledgements

Research Team:
Mavra Ahmed, PhD
Beatriz Franco-Arellano, MSc
Jodi Bernstein, MPH, PhD
Anthea Christoforou, PhD
Kacie Dickinson, PhD
Salma Hack, BSc
Kimiya Karbasy, BSc
Christine Mulligan, BSc
Sarah Murphy, BSc
Alena Ng, BSc
Alyssa Schermel, MSc
Lana Vanderlee, PhD
Laura Vergeer, BSc
Madyson Weippert, BSc

Collaborators
JoAnne Arcand, UOIT
Adriana Blanco-Meltzer, INCENSA
Laurette Dube, McGill
Mahsa Jessri, U Ottawa
Marie Eve Labonte, U Laval
Wendy Lou, UofT
Elizabeth Mansfield, Health Canada
Doug Manuel, OHRI, ICES
Jean Claude Moubarac, U Montreal
Bruce Neal, George Inst, U Sydney
Monique Potvin Kent, U Ottawa
Veronique Provencher, Laval
Mike Rayner, U Oxford, UK
Boyd Swinburn, U Auckland, NZ

http://labbelab.utoronto.ca/
mary.labbe@utoronto.ca