
New food labelling law approved by Mexican government, opposed by industry

Will Mexican people's health be held back by the food and beverage industry? © Shutterstock

Mexico approved a new warning labelling regulation for food and beverages in January, but industry groups have appealed against it.

After a 2019 reform of the General Health Law and after an open consultation with all sectors, the Mexican regulatory agencies approved modifications to the Mexican Norm NOM-051, the relevant official mandatory standard, for an ambitious front of package (FOP) warning labelling of foods and beverages. This new regulation would replace the current Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) labels in the country, which civil society argue were developed with the support of industry groups back in 2014.

The new FOP warning labelling system is modelled following the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) nutrient profile, and the successful warning labelling that Chile adopted in 2015. The Chilean system has obtained worldwide recognition as **a powerful policy to alert consumers on products' sugar, fat, sodium and calories levels**. The comprehensive obesity prevention policy package in Chile, including the FOP warning labelling, has helped decrease purchases of SSBs by almost 1/4 between 2015 and 2017 (Taillie et al, 2020).



Chilean Senator Guido Girardi spoke about Chile's leadership in labelling of unhealthy foods at the third Global NCD Alliance Forum in February 2020.

The Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition (the national NCD alliance) has been advocating for this new regulation alongside other important civil society coalitions, such as the ContraPESO coalition and the *Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria* (Nutrition Health Alliance), as well as prominent researchers from the National Institute of Public Health and legislators. The Ministries of Health and Commerce, as well as the national regulatory agency (Cofepris), have also been supportive of this measure.

After the NOM-051 modifications were approved, **the government needed to publish them in the official gazette to start the implementation process, however industry groups appealed against it claiming it didn't consider private sector voices nor the latest scientific evidence.** On March 1st, industry groups obtained a court resolution for a provisional suspension of the new regulation based on their claims. In response, government agencies released a [public statement](#) [1] signed by the Ministries of Health and Commerce and Cofepris, restating that the new regulation looks at creating an easy-to-understand labelling system with the aim to prevent obesity in the country.

Civil society advocates have publicly decried this decision calling on the judicial powers to not cede to economic interests and protect the health of the population, and to overrule this suspension and allow for the immediate publication of the new FOP labelling.

Read here a [letter](#) [2] from NCD Alliance to the government of Mexico expressing support for the new regulation and evidencing the food and beverage industries' undue influence on the process (read the letter in Spanish [here](#) [3]). The NCD Alliance joins other global allies such as PAHO, UNICEF, World Obesity Federation and World Cancer Research Fund in the international recognition to this new policy.

The NCD Alliance stands ready to support Mexico and countries worldwide to promote and adopt internationally recommended NCD and obesity prevention and control policies.

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Published on NCD Alliance (<https://ncdalliance.org>)

Post Date: Tuesday, 3 March, 2020

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[2] https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/NCDA_Letter%20of%20support%20new%20FOP%20warning%20label_March2020%20ENG_final.pdf

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