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Front-of-Pack Warning Labels in Mexico Linked to Reductions in Calories and Harmful Nutrients Sold

A new study published in *Social Science and Medicine* by researchers at Mexico's National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill evaluated the changes in sales of packaged foods and beverages following Mexico's Front-of-Package Warning Label (FOPWL) policy. Using national sales analysis, researchers concluded that the FOPWL policy was associated with reductions in calories, added sugars, saturated fat and sodium sold from packaged foods and beverages. While the overall amount of packaged foods and beverages sold remained stable, the nutritional quality of products sold improved markedly following both the announcement and implementation of the policy.

In October 2020, Mexico implemented mandatory octagonal FOPWL displayed on packaged foods and beverages that exceed thresholds for calories, added sugars, saturated fat or sodium to address the country's high burden of diet-related noncommunicable diseases.

Researchers analyzed monthly packaged food and beverage sales data from 2017 to 2022 and linked these data with time-varying, market-representative nutritional information to account for changes in product formulation over time. The packaged food and beverages analyzed in the study were: 1) sweetened beverages, 2) candies, 3) salty snacks, 4) cereal-based desserts, 5) bread, 6) dairy products and 7) sauces and canned tuna. Further, the study used an interrupted time-series design that examined changes following both the policy announcement (April–September 2020) and policy implementation (October 2020–2022). The data allowed the researchers to assess changes in the overall sales volume of packaged foods and beverages increased or decreased, and changes in the nutritional content of foods and beverages sold after the policy was introduced.

Key Findings

- Sales of products in terms of calories and harmful nutrients (like sodium, sugar and fat) dropped following the FOPWL policy announcement and implementation. The percentage indicates the comparison with estimates of what sales would have been if the policy wasn't implemented:
 - sales of calories declined by 15%
 - added sugars by 25%
 - saturated fat by 12%
 - sodium by 7%
- Food-group-specific reductions in sales volume after the policy implementation occurred for dairy products (-13%), candies (-7%), and cereal-based desserts (-3%).
- The study found large reductions in the sales of calories and added sugars for candies and sweetened beverages. Notable reductions in sodium and saturated fat occurred in salty snacks, bread, sauces and canned tuna.
 - Sodium reduction ranged between 5% to 19% for packaged products. Bread had the largest decrease at 19%, followed by candies at 16%, cereal based desserts at 13% and salty snacks at 5%.

- Food-group-specific, policy-related increases in fiber and protein sold occurred:
 - Fiber content increased by 28% in bread and by 7% in cereal-based desserts.
 - Protein content increased by 12% in sauces and canned tuna.
- Results were robust to supplementary analyses aimed at accounting for the negative economic implications linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Messages

- A new study finds that Mexico's FOPWL policy has led to meaningful improvements in the nutritional quality of packaged foods and beverages sold nationwide.
- The study found overall sales reductions in calories and health-harming nutrients, and food-group-specific reductions in sodium or saturated fat for salty snacks, bread, sauces and canned tuna.
- This research provides further evidence on the power of policies like FOPWL in improving diet quality, especially when implemented alongside food and beverage taxes and other nutrition policies aimed at reducing the burden of NCDs.

Citation: Garduño-Alanis, A., Salgado, J. C., Contreras-Manzano, A., Aburto, T. C., Moreno-Aguilar, L. A., Ng, S. W., & Barquera, S. (2026). Changes in sales of packaged food and beverages, energy, and nutrients after the implementation of front-of-pack warning labels in Mexico. *Social Science & Medicine*, 119209.