

# COST, EQUITY AND ACCEPTABILITY OF FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABELS TO PREVENT CHILD OBESITY

## A NARRATIVE REVIEW

**Childhood obesity is rising globally and is predicted to affect 254 million children by 2030** - a 100 million increase in the course of a decade.\*

Countries worldwide have committed to a zero increase in obesity by 2025. To meet this commitment, governments are encouraged to **promote healthy behaviours and reshape obesogenic environments** through a variety of population-wide policies.

The **implementation of front-of-pack (FOP) nutrition labelling schemes** is one such measure. Globally, **six countries** have mandatory FOP labelling schemes in place.

While other reviews investigated the effectiveness of FOP labels for preventing obesity, including which formats are likely to be more successful, the current one assessed the **cost and cost-effectiveness, equity and acceptability of FOP nutrition labelling policies**.

### Cost and cost-effectiveness

FOP labelling is **low cost and highly cost-effective**, including in the short term. In addition, back-of-pack nutrition labelling also saves more money than it costs to implement.

**Costs for industry** are mainly linked to redesigning and reprinting packages and to possibly reformulating products to improve labelling profiles and marketing opportunities.

### Equity

Certain types of FOP labels tend to be more effective in lower socio-economic groups. For instance, **colour-coded formats tend to be better understood** by consumers with lower education and income.

Moreover, consumers in these groups may be less likely to use nutrition information on food packages. An FOP scheme that is more effective at driving **food reformulation** therefore, has the potential to increase benefit.

### Acceptability

There is **general support** for improved nutrition information across all stakeholder types, especially in easily understood formats. **Health and consumer groups** show a strong positive attitude towards FOP labelling.

While there has been resistance from **commercial stakeholders** involved in selling foods high in fats, sugars and salt, **acceptance of FOP is rising**.

**Warning labels**, another type of FOP scheme, are likely to be highly cost-effective, positive for healthy equity, moderately supported by the public, highly supported by civil society and highly opposed by commercial interests.

Overall, the review concluded that **there is sufficient evidence for policy makers to adopt FOP labelling policies** to tackle obesogenic food environments.





Science and Technology in  
childhood Obesity Policy

# Cost, equity and acceptability of front-of-pack nutrition labels to prevent child obesity

## Front-of-package nutrition labelling is:



HIGHLY COST-  
EFFECTIVE



MODERATELY  
FAVOURABLE FOR  
HEALTH EQUITY



STRONGLY  
SUPPORTED BY HEALTH  
PROFESSIONALS and  
CIVIL SOCIETY



MODERATELY  
SUPPORTED BY  
PUBLIC



MODERATELY  
OPPOSED BY  
COMMERCIAL  
INTERESTED ACTORS

## To improve health equity FOP should:

Be colour  
coded



Be very easily  
understood



Result in product  
reformulation



Include an  
indication of  
unhealthiness



## Future research should focus on:



Children's use of FOP labelling



Impact of numeracy and literacy  
level on use of FOP labels