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HCC PRESS RELEASE

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LANDMARK CHILEAN LAW IS EFFECTIVE IN TACKLING DRIVERS OF OBESITY

Studies show comprehensive policies do work to reduce consumers' sugary drink purchases, children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing and advertising

Recent studies of obesity prevention efforts implemented in Chile have found that consumers purchased fewer sugary drinks, while Chilean children saw less advertising and marketing of unhealthy food and drinks, thanks to a comprehensive food advertising and labeling law that went into effect in 2016. The three studies, published in peer-reviewed journals, underscore why Caribbean governments should strongly consider effective front-of- package warning labels and marketing restrictions as part of their obesity prevention efforts, says the Healthy Caribbean Coalition.

In 2016, Chile implemented the Law of Food Labeling and Advertising, which is the first national regulation that requires front-of-package warning labels on foods and beverages high in added sugars, salt, or saturated fats, restricts child-directed marketing of such foods, and bans the sales of these foods in and near schools. A [*Public Health Nutrition*](#) study found that the Chilean policy led to significant reductions in children's exposure to junk food ads. An [*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*](#) study found that there was a significantly lower use of child-directed marketing strategies in sugary breakfast cereal packages as a result of the Chilean policy.

While sugary drink purchases had decreased slightly after implementation of a previous 5% tax of sugary drinks, there were much larger reductions in the volume of high-in-sugar beverage purchases once the additional policy measures went into effect. ***A collaborative study between researchers at the University of Chile's Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology, the University of North Carolina, and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública found that bundled obesity prevention policies led to a significant reduction in purchases of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) in Chilean households.*** The findings were published in the online

peer-reviewed weekly medical journal PLOS Medicine on February 11, 2020. The study underscores how a comprehensive policy can strongly influence consumer behavior.

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) welcomes the Chilean studies' findings, which provide growing evidence that the policy in that country has been effective. More importantly, this strong scientific evidence demonstrates that front-of-package warning labels and marketing restrictions influence how unhealthy products are marketed to children. At present, the Caribbean is negotiating revision of food labeling standards to mandate inclusion of front of package 'high in' warning labels on prepackaged foods, through CARICOM's Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). Evidence has shown that 'high in' nutrition warning labels modify consumer behaviour by shifting their purchases from unhealthy foods to healthier options which are lower in sugars, fats and salt. These labels should help consumers better understand what is in their food.

The HCC supports the implementation of mandatory front of package nutrition warning labels as committed to by the Heads of CARICOM in 2018 at the 39th CARICOM Heads of State and Government Summit, as part of a comprehensive set of policy measures including the ban of the sale and marketing of sweet beverages in school settings and taxation of sweet beverages of at least 20%, to empower consumers to make healthy nutrition choices.

“Sir Trevor Hassell applauds the leadership of the Chilean government and the implementation of this progressive food regulation. We will continue our advocacy in the Caribbean to bring about similar policies in accordance with our *Urgent Call to Action* released in September 2019 to address the epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity in the region.”