

PAHO urges support for CARICOM for front-of-package warnings against unhealthy food

Washington, D.C. December 17 (PAHO) The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) today urged support for the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) proposal to put front-of-package nutritional warnings on food products, which have been shown to help people make healthier dietary choices. The labeling allows consumers to correctly, quickly, and easily identify foods that are excessive in fats, sugar, and sodium (salt) – all of which are linked to noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

The CROSQ proposal, which is under review by CARICOM Member States, suggests adopting front-of-package labeling that meets PAHO thresholds for excessive fats, sugars, and sodium.

“People living in the Caribbean still do not have access to simple and easily understood information about whether food products contain excessive and potentially harmful amounts of sugars, sodium or fats,” said Anselm Hennis, Director of PAHO’s Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. “The need to know about these food products is even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, as persons with NCDs are at greater risk of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19.”

“In the Caribbean, about one third of the population is at such a risk,” he continued. “They must be extra careful to avoid products excessive in sugars, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats or total fats.”

What are front-of-package nutrition warnings



Front-of-package nutritional warnings are simple, easily understood warning labels that indicate if products are high in sugar, sodium, fats, saturated fats, and trans fats. The nutritional warnings found in the proposal under review by the Member States of CARICOM have undergone rigorous scientific evaluation and are recognized as the best performing system to correctly, quickly, and easily identify products that contain excessive amounts of fats, sugars, and sodium.

The science that led to the development of nutritional front-of-package warnings is based on consumer research that received the Nobel Prize on Economic Sciences in 2002. Additionally, Mexico, which adopted a system similar to the one proposed by CROSQ, was recently recognized by the UN.

Hennis pointed out that supermarkets are crowded with thousands of packaged items and shoppers spend only a few seconds selecting an item – too little time to find out whether the product is good for their health or contributes to high blood pressure, high blood sugar levels and overweight/obesity. These three conditions are responsible for almost half of all deaths in the Caribbean (47%).

The CROSQ proposal is also in line with the recent statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health, who emphasized the responsibility of nations to take measures, such as the adoption of front-of-package warning labels on unhealthy food and drink products, to protect the right of the population to health.

The [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.

LINKS

[Front-of-Package Labeling as a Policy Tool for the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Americas](#)

[PAHO Nutrient Profile](#)

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