

# Global Foodscapes

Forecasts from our Global Food and Nutrition Affairs Team

foodminds

Welcome to the third edition of Global Foodscapes, news and insights you can use from FoodMinds' global food and nutrition affairs team. Today's issue focuses on the increasingly complex and expanding front-of-pack labeling landscape and underscores the need for companies to take proactive measures to successfully navigate changes in labeling policies.

Is there a particular topic you'd like to see covered in a future Foodscapes? Let us know [here!](#)

– Sarah Levy, FoodMinds' Global Director of Food & Nutrition Affairs



Images courtesy of the Pan American Health Organization and Tips News.

## Five Things You

# Should Know About:



## Front-of-Pack Labeling (FOPL)

### 1. FOPL is gaining momentum across global markets, with mandatory, interpretive labels becoming the norm.

Today, [more than 30 governments](#) have adopted FOPL systems. Most of these were implemented in the last 10 years, and half of those launched in the last five years are government mandated. FOPL formats have also evolved from informative labels, which simply restate nutrition information from back-of-pack, to interpretive labels, which use colors, symbols or scores to judge the healthfulness of the product. In its [2021 Global Index](#), the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNI) recommends companies implement interpretive FOPL, highlighting that proactive action could lead to a better ranking. Globally, there is strong government, public health, industry and consumer advocate support for FOPL to help consumers make informed, healthier choices, though stakeholder opinions on preferred label formats and enforcement requirements differ.

**2. FOPL impacts go beyond labeling.** FOPL systems – and the nutrient profiling models underpinning them – are now informing other significant nutrition policies. The Chilean government has tied their FOPL system to [marketing restrictions](#), banning products with warning labels from being advertised to children. In Malaysia, FOPL has been used as the basis for a sugar-sweetened [beverage tax](#). Moving forward, these types of policy applications will almost assuredly expand.

**3. Authorities are attempting to unify the FOPL systems in use.** Sweeping efforts are underway to harmonize systems to ease trade barriers, minimize consumer confusion and encourage country-level adoption. The EU is working on proposing a [single FOPL format](#) for the entire region by 2022 – with many stakeholders pushing for Nutri-Score – while in Latin America, MERCOSUR may encourage member countries to adopt consistent warning labels focused on sodium, free sugars, total fat, saturated fat and sweeteners. Global authorities like Codex Alimentarius and the World Health Organization are also [issuing FOPL guidance](#). While the theory of regional and global harmonization is supported by many, there are significant [barriers to adoption](#), including local experiences, cultural or traditional preferences, a lack of consistent data on label effectiveness and more. Companies should actively monitor harmonization developments and understand the impacts that individual and coordinated labeling schemes have on their business.

**4. Sustainability is gaining ground in the FOPL space too.** The UN Food Systems Summit highlights FOPL under its [“Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable and healthy consumption patterns,”](#) positioning FOPL as a Game Changing idea. This and other recent efforts, including [France’s Eco-Score](#) and [late-breaking Planet-Score](#), the [EU Farm to Fork strategy](#), and [Foundation Earth’s new initiative](#), reflect growing calls to address both human and planetary health. Eco-label proponents argue these schemes fill gaps by providing consumers with additional transparency around the environmental impacts of foods and beverages. However, the proliferation of FOPL labels – on the environmental and nutrition side – may cause consumer confusion, extra costs and complexities for manufacturers, and

further barriers to harmonization. Look for future FOPL efforts to explore integrating environmental sustainability and nutrition, and to evolve in other ways based on how these new labels perform in the marketplace.

**5. The U.S. lags behind other countries on FOPL – for now.** Although there has been widespread expansion of FOPL policies globally, the U.S. has not prioritized FOPL since 2010-2011, when the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine published [two reports](#) on recommended FOPL systems and symbols. While many U.S. food and beverage companies continue to use the voluntary, industry-backed [Facts Up Front](#), this informative FOPL may not pass muster with regulators for long. Just earlier this month, House and Senate Democrats reintroduced the [Food Labeling Modernization Act](#), which calls for a standardized, interpretive FOPL system. And within the year, the Food and Drug Administration is expected to provide guidance on a front-of-pack symbol to accompany the forthcoming revised “healthy” claim. U.S. companies should take cues from the global FOPL space to proactively prepare for inevitable U.S. developments.

Interested in learning more? FoodMinds' global food and nutrition affairs team helps clients navigate and participate in the evolving landscape and prepare for the future. Reply to this email or reach out to [Sarah Levy](#) to start the conversation.



## Global Food Views



**What can food and beverage companies start doing today to prepare for the FOPL realities of tomorrow?**

*“Based on proposed and existing FOPL in local markets, food and beverage companies should consider, where possible, reformulating products to contain lower levels of calories, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar – and/or other nutrients or ingredients included in FOPL nutrient profiles – to avoid warning labels or promote more positive FOPL outcomes.*”

*Many companies have already reformulated products in anticipation of these labeling changes.”*

*- Global ExpertBench™ Mexico*

*“Food and beverage companies can accompany reformulation and nutrition strategies with educational campaigns that promote consumer awareness and understanding of FOPL to help consumers make informed choices in the context of an overall healthy eating pattern.”*

*- Global ExpertBench™ Colombia*



Photo courtesy of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

## Food for Thought



**Reflections and perspectives from the FoodMinds team on emerging food systems topics.**

### **Convenience is King: Food Delivery Apps Poised for Post-Pandemic Success**

*“Online food delivery services are on the rise and show no signs of slowing amid lifting pandemic-era restrictions. Food and beverage companies would be wise to consider strategies that tap into the surging popularity of e-commerce.”*

### **The New Food Policy Frontier: Business Expectations In A Biden, COVID-19 Era**

“One could argue that the world is now grappling with four public health pandemics: climate change, undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and COVID-19. The coronavirus crisis has exposed the reality that to build back stronger, society must address all four challenges in an integrated way. In this article, we take a look at how governments are implementing policy and regulatory solutions in this new era.”

### **5 in 5: Head-Turning Stories from Recent Weeks**

"From government-led initiatives to start-up innovations, more and more eco-labels will be popping up on product packaging. A food technology startup out of the UK allows business to calculate and label the environmental impact of their food (think carbon footprint, pollution, water use and land use)."



Global food and nutrition affairs is FoodMinds' point of difference. Learn more here.

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