

UNDERSTANDING THE LABELS ▶▶▶▶

As a result of difficulties related to reading and understanding nutritional labels of food items, the need to improve the standard was identified by using fuller and clearer information for the consumer. After a long regulatory process involving various players, technical meetings and public consultation, a new standard was approved by Anvisa in October 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite having some technical limitations, the new nutritional labeling standard for packaged food items represents a major step forward in ensuring consumers' right to information. It is also a win for organized civil society, who defended the transparency of the process.

WHAT CHANGES WITH THE NEW LABELING

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION TABLE

The design of the nutritional information table on the package has been standardized through color, type and font size, with the aim of ensuring visual identity and legibility.

The number of portions is presented on the package, in addition to the defined portion of the food in grams and in the corresponding household measure.

The energy and nutritional values have been included in 100 g or 100 ml of the product, facilitating comparison between products, as well as the percent daily value (%DV) and portion, which were already included in the previous standard.

It is now mandatory to show amounts of total and added sugars, separated from the total amount of carbohydrates.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION			
Portions per package: 000 portions			
Portion: 00 g (household measure)			
	100 g	000 g	%VD*
Energy value (Kcal)			
Total carbohydrates (g)			
Total sugar (g)			
Added sugar (g)			
Protein (g)			
Total fat (g)			
Saturated fat (g)			
Trans fat (g)			
Food fiber (g)			
Sodium (mg)			
*Percent of daily values provided by portion			



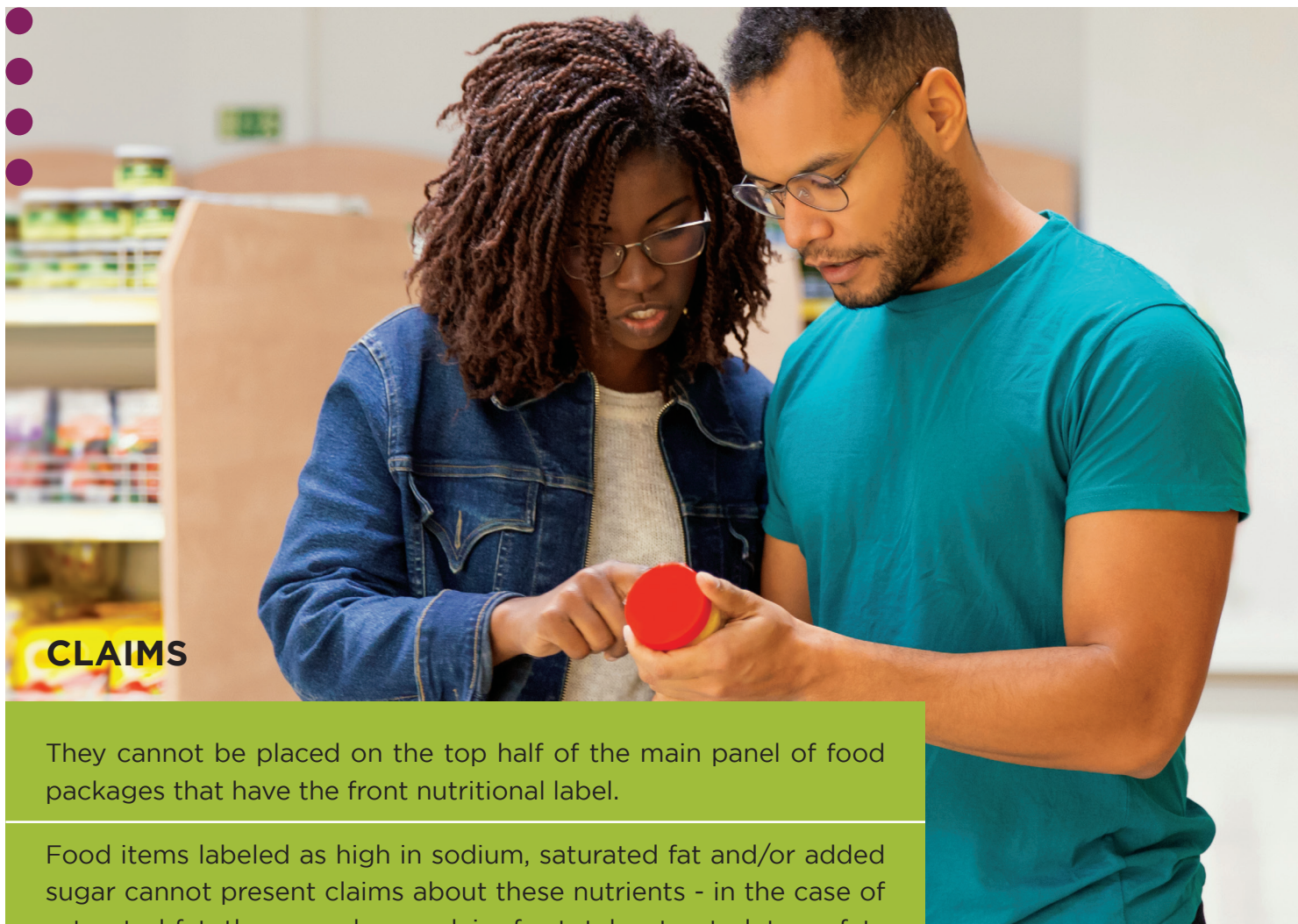
FRONT NUTRITION LABELING

- The front nutrition labeling template is a rectangle with a black and white magnifying glass, followed by the words “high in” for three nutrients: added sugar, saturated fat and sodium.
- The seal must be located in the upper half of the package’s main panel, and it is proportionate to the size of the package.
- Eligibility Criteria: front nutritional labeling is prohibited for products that do not have ingredients with added sugars or significant saturated fat or sodium values (examples: fruit, vegetables, legumes, tubers, cereals, flours; meat and fish, eggs, cheese) and is always prohibited for products such as infant formula, milk, culinary ingredients (salt, olive oil, vegetable oil) and food supplements, among others.
- Nutrient profile template: for each nutrient there is a cut-off point for the front nutrition labeling declaration.



LIMITS OF ADDED SUGAR, SATURATED FATS, AND SODIUM FOR FRONT NUTRITION LABELING DECLARATION.

NUTRIENTS	SOLID OR SEMI-SOLID FOOD	LIQUID FOOD
ADDED SUGAR	Quantity higher or equal to 15 g of added sugar per 100 g of food.	Quantity higher or equal to 7.5 g of added sugar per 100 ml of food.
SATURATED FATS	Quantity higher or equal to 6 g of saturated fats per 100g of food.	Quantity higher or equal to 3 g of saturated fats per 100 ml of food.
SODIUM	Quantity higher or equal to 600 mg of sodium per 100 g of food.	Quantity higher or equal to 300 mg of sodium per 100 ml of food.



CLAIMS

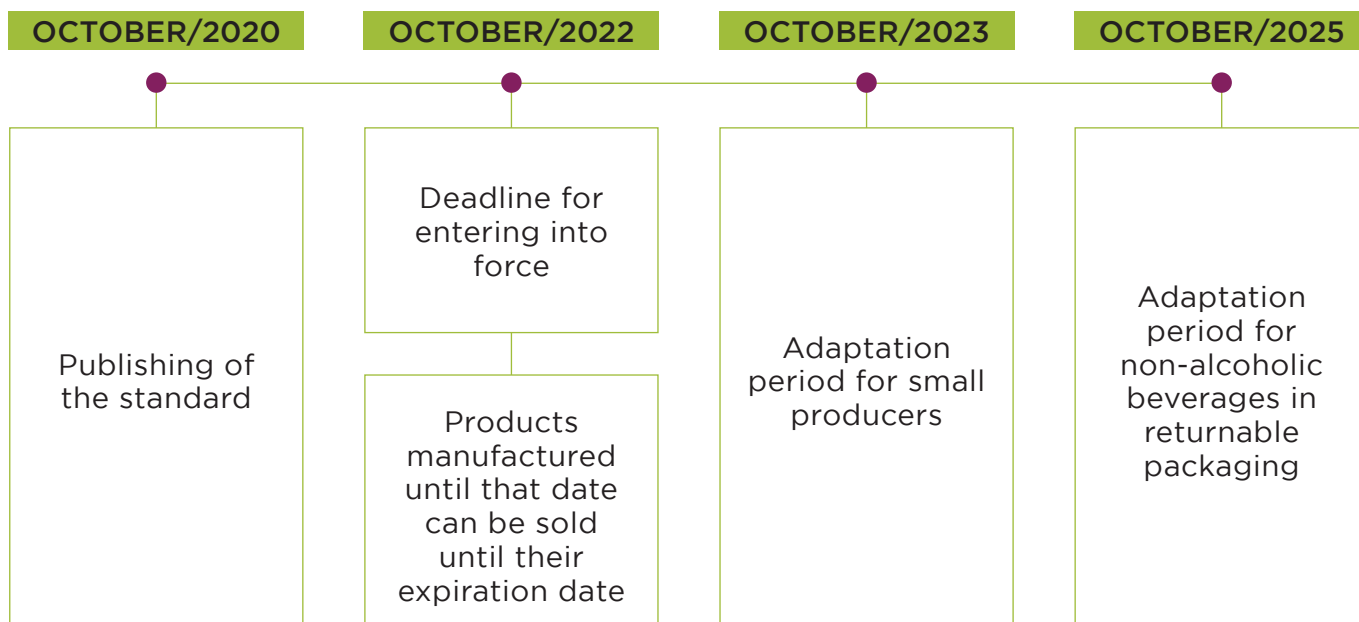
They cannot be placed on the top half of the main panel of food packages that have the front nutritional label.

Food items labeled as high in sodium, saturated fat and/or added sugar cannot present claims about these nutrients - in the case of saturated fat, there can be no claim for total, saturated, trans fats or cholesterol.

In the case of food items with the magnifying glass, other claims may only be included in the lower half of the package.



IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE



POINTS THAT WE STILL NEED TO ADVANCE ON



Despite the victory of having a new nutritional labeling standard, there are still challenges to be overcome to actually ensure consumers' right to information, which in turn, can help them make conscious and healthier food choices. Below, we list some points of attention that need furthering in the discussion:

The nutrient profile adopted by Anvisa is less rigid, which leaves many unhealthy products without the magnifying glass. The nutrient profile of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) establishes more appropriate limits for identifying processed and ultra-processed products, whose consumption should be avoided based on the prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The presence of sugar substitute in products will not be informed by the front label, ingredient that often goes unnoticed in consumers' ingredient list and whose consumption is potentially harmful.

The deadline for the standard to start being implemented was quite long (24 months), unlike other Latin American countries, and it is even longer for soft drinks in returnable packaging, which is quite worrying given that these drinks have a high added sugar and sodium content in some versions.

Keeping nutritional information by portion and %DV can lead to confusion by consumers, as nutritional needs vary from person to person and the portion indicated on the label is not always the amount usually consumed.

Children aimed advertising is not prohibited on the front label, which can weaken the nutritional message.



Allowing claims on products with seals can confuse consumers: a product that is labeled "high in saturated fat" may also claim to be "high in fiber" and decision-making becomes more difficult.